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ABSTRACT

Prepared by classroom teachers, the papers in this collection synthesize their own teaching experiences with recent writing research revelations. Among the topics covered in the 37 papers are (1) computers in the English classroom, (2) values clarification and the teaching of autobiographical writing, (3) using journals, (4) grammar instruction, (5) sensory techniques in writing assignments, (6) writing across the curriculum, (7) hemispheric specialization and teaching writing, (8) peer editing, (9) short story writing, (10) art and writing for the junior high school student, (11) using the newspaper to teach writing, (12) prewriting activities for elementary school students, (13) the use of film to motivate writing, (14) teaching audience through children's books, (15) creating a writing laboratory, (16) teaching paragraph structure, (17) fantasy, (18) community-centered writing, (19) sentence combining and peer evaluation, and (20) extending literature through writing in the elementary school classroom. (FL)

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TEACHERS AT WORK:
Articles from the Ohio Writing Project

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edited by:
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Preface

Here are thirty-seven papers by classroom teachers who daily try to teach an old skill in a new age. Their schools are beset with economic problems. Their students are more interested in ways of beating Pac Man than in ways of styling sentences. And their communities undervalue their services. Still, the teachers remain professionals.

In fact, they spent four hot, muggy weeks last summer in a six-hour per day program aimed at honing their professional skills. They had to write, to study, and to confront the major issues in the teaching of composition. The papers in this volume synthesize the confrontations. The papers combine the teachers' practical classroom skills and knowledge gained on the job with their newly learned textbook theory. So here is a teacher who learned to fit her circle-story exercise within a cognitive framework reported by Britton. And there is a teacher who, intrigued by a sentence-combining book left in his classroom, learned to use it. The teachers show us how they broaden their students' views through writing about literature, try to encourage vocational students to be more fluent writers, and learn to solve the problems posed by different types of administrators.

Here are thirty-seven papers by classroom teachers who are part of a nationwide movement to improve the teaching of writing. Some of the papers you will find interesting. Some you will find enlightening. The papers are evidence of how much the teachers learned and how much they are able and willing to teach.

Max Morenberg
Mary F. Hayes
Janet Ziegler

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The Role of Values Clarification in Teaching Autobiographical Writing

Michael Irwin

I. The Comet Syndrome

When I was a seventh-grader, I wrote reams of essays for Mr. Haley. With wire-rimmed glasses skiing down his nose, crazed hair, and mock expression, he asked his invariable question: "Is this as good as the last?" My stock response was "I sure hope so." We would laugh, and he would hurry me back to my seat, his smile conveying his certainty that I would uphold the prose ideals of structure, grammar, and usage. In general, he was not a teacher who encouraged risk-taking in writing, preferring instead the time-tested methodology of dull, mummified sentences.

Neither did he encourage risk-taking in literary analysis, though he expected us to be literary critics. During a class discussion, he once shrieked, "Why do you think Red Chief deserves to be ransomed? You aren't looking inside yourself, at your own values. You're saying nothing." Yet he provided no path of self-discovery to use as a tool, nor tendered a suggestion useful in helping us clarify why we thought what we thought.

So on we plodded. One morning, Haley dispensed a flurry of dittoes entitled "Me," with a list of ten topics following. In effect, we were to write an autobiographical sketch in which we were to explore our feelings and beliefs on some aspect of ourselves. I thought it was a fine hand to be dealt, little realizing that the ante for staying in the game was too high.

Two mornings later, "The Comet," as we nicknamed him, flashed across the room in a streak of fury. Perching upon his stool, he wore his "I'm-not-happy-with-you-people" expression. We steeled ourselves for the impending attack. For Haley was about to explode into tirade, and in full-fledged temper he was formidable. His eyes bulged, his voice sharpened to a razor's edge, and the slaughter began.

"The results of the personal essay assignment do not please me."

He paused, glaring balefully.

We melted like warming butter into the sticky wood grain of the old desks. The sobering effect achieved, he loaded a new clip of ammunition and fired.

"I have never read such trash in my entire life. You are supposed to be seventh-graders, not pre-schoolers. The junk you wrote was general and immature. Don't you know anything about yourselves? Anything?

The Comet was in flight. As his stare whizzed across the room, I dared to smile when he caught my eye. His glare deepened to thunderclouds. Silently chastised, my face tightened. Had I, his ace composition writer, failed the test? I had chosen to write on a moment of personal crisis, and had encountered problems along the way, but felt generally pleased with the result. No, I decided. He couldn't be after me.

He fished a paper from the stack, mustered his forces, and spewed a staccato blast of words.

"I shall read to you the worst of the lot, hoping to instruct you as to what not to do when writing about yourselves."

I silently prayed he would have the good grace not to embarrass the

transgressor too thoroughly. Mark, my impish best friend and eternal violator of correct usage, tossed me a stricken look from two rows over. I caught his fear, and pitched back a reassuring glance. Having been on the receiving end of The Comet's public executions before, Mark mentally was promising His Creator any number of reforms for a safe run across home plate. He had agonized about the certain bloodbath he would receive from Haley's genetically attached red pen. He slouched, convinced he was the culprit. I sat back at ease, sympathetic to the helpless victim who had massacred a tenet from the Book of Haley.

Meanwhile, the Haley-thing had completed the metamorphosis from teacher to creature. It now took a gasp of air, exhaling steam to commence the holocaust.

"The title of this is "A Long Way Back," it spat. "Never mind who wrote it. It is terrible!"

The blood rushed in a flash flood to my face, for today's menu was to be me, served up in little chunks for the entire class to devour. I had evidently broken one of the major commandments: "Thou shalt not dare to be unclear about thyself." I mulled over what I had said in the essay, unsure of how I had been vague. I thought I had peered the heart of the moment, not skimmed its surface trippingly. I thought I had supported every assertion with specifics. I thought I had lived up to the laws of writing as I knew them. Evidently I had not. What, then?

The gargoyle finished. It spoke.

"The problems here are numerous. Just look at the sentence fragments! Also, listen to how personally the writer speaks. He is trying too hard to get us to live through it with him. No one wants to live through a burn accident. It's unpleasant. It's too personal. Finally, listen to how he makes no value judgment on what the whole ordeal meant. He doesn't tell us if he learned anything from it, or if he didn't. He doesn't seem to know, and neither do we."

No value judgment? Maybe not, but is a seventh-grader an Einstein of self-evaluation? Sentence fragments? I suppose I had just condemned myself to the fiery furnace with that one. As for the "too personal" aspect, . . . Ken Macrorie addresses the point in Uptaught. He recounts reading a student paper at a Louisville conference. The piece assumed the "I" voice, and, with the exception of one teacher, intrigued the audience with its humor and irony. The dissenter found it "too personal. We need to teach our students public writing, which they must employ throughout college and in graduate school" (1970, p. 136).

The Comet would nod assent, for he intended the autobiographical sketch to be an exercise in grammar and exposition, not an enlightening self-discovery. Macrorie calls this practice a falseness in writing, theorizing that the student learns to write not "truths that count for him. Not to connect his experience to what he reads and hears about . . . but to master an academic tongue" (p. 8). The tongue, however, became forked. Haley asked us to write with detail on a personal issue, yet gave us no platform from which to dive into its waters of values. He demanded personal voice in formalized terminology, so as to make the writing palatable to himself as audience, and therefore "public." He, in short, did not want to be involved in his students' innermost thoughts, but instead demanded that the values he sought from us be sanitized. And finally, he did not understand that personal writing, when clarifying the values and thoughts of its author, becomes a vital link in students' evolution in writing.

Having survived The Comet's orbit relatively unsinged, I slowly grew to believe that well-developed autobiography was largely ignored in countless schools. Save an elementary exercise or two, and an occasional high school excursion into it, I discovered that most of my college classmates in the 70s

had never fully explored its experience in the 60s. I found it unusual that I knew only two English majors who had kept grammar school journals. I wondered if teachers would begin to understand the need for autobiographical writing, and for a means to help the students clarify what they thought about themselves as they wrote.

It took five years of teaching to find out.

II. Stalled Machinery

I began to teach high school French, and a few years later learned that I was also to instruct senior-level college prep English. I thrilled to the challenge of having the entire National Honor Society in my first-period class. It was a dream schedule that became a nightmare before a student's paper flashed me back into my past and changed the future.

The second week of school, that sixth year, I assigned an autobiographical paragraph, hoping to glean some insight about the students that would help me get to know and understand them. I followed a blind path I had learned for years, successfully mimicking the Haleys of junior high in my demands for homage to the gods of grammar. I handed out a sheet of instructions that simply said, "Write! Tell me something about you." As I sat with papers askew to evaluate the results, I began to mumble and curse under my breath. Two, then six . . . ten . . . twenty-two paragraphs of verbal swamp. This was the National Honor Society? I reread, hoping I was mistaken. One paper in particular, written by Andrea, the potential class salutatorian, caught my horrified eye:

Confusion

> Me. Who am I? I honestly don't know. I get sick every time I'm asked to "look inside," as the English teachers say. Thank God we've only had to do this a few times in twelve years. How do you expect us to understand ourselves when school crams only the theory of relativity, linear algebra, and the Spanish-American War down our throats? I hate to sound like a "bleeding heart," but we've been expected to memorize facts for so long that we don't have a chance to "understand ourselves." I'm sure I've got values, but the demands of school and home don't allow me any time to examine them, let alone apply them. I know you're going to hate this essay, but I'm being honest, anyway. I wish the rest of the college preppies would try a little for a change. They'll probably make up something just for a grade, and lie themselves into the Top Ten in the class. I think it's a shallow victory. I hope you understand why that's so the next time you ask a question about a character in a story, and you get blank stares in return. The mental machinery stalled long ago.

I had asked for a short autobiographical sketch. I had received an unwittingly well-done one--with disturbing implications. I sat back, suddenly propelled to a classroom fifteen years in the past. This time the voice I heard was not Andrea's, but mine. I wondered how I could have forgotten so easily Haley's class, and my contention that clarification of self was vital to writing on any level. Yet the tone and insight in Andrea's essay was truthfully consistent with what she alleged about the other students' work. They had found twenty-two ways to talk around themselves, lying the great falsehood of the academic tongue--mine and Haley's. It was time for a change.

III. A New Game Plan for Prewriting

"Everybody, put your books away. As a matter of fact, don't even bring them to class until further notice."

Stares of amazement bore into my eyes. They couldn't believe that an advanced-placement teacher would be so bold--or insane.

"All I want you to bring is pencil, pen, crayon--I don't even care which--and paper."

Quizzical eyebrows arched and amusement shot across the room. But they waited expectantly. Andrea in particular looked at me, not sure what to anticipate. I began to pass back the papers I had read the night before. Murmurs of "I got an A? For this?" dissolved to "There're no red marks on it! What's he pulling?" They crouched in wait for the rest of the proverbial rug to be snatched up.

"You all have an A next to your name for this assignment. Keep it in the folder I'm about to give you. All papers go in it from now on. Some you will get credit for, and some you will get grades for. You will help determine which ones are graded, and which ones get credited in the grade book. Also, you'll be keeping a journal--only for your use, unless you would like me to see it. Fair enough?"

They smiled. They began to sense that a new experience was about to unfold.

"Now, we are going to play some games. We'll likely be playing them for a while. I'll guarantee only two results from all of this. You will be amazed at how much you really do know about yourselves! Also, you will more easily read the works in your books, because you'll be thinking more clearly about your reactions to them. In other words, you'll re-discover self, and newly discover reading and writing."

They regarded me suspiciously, but a spark of interest underlay the distrust.

So we began in earnest. For a week, we worked through a number of values-clarification strategies, taken from Simon, Howe, and Kirschenbaum's Values Clarifications (1978). The class made name tags consisting of three -ing words describing themselves. I did, too, and broke the ice by asserting that I was maddening, questioning, and philosophizing, pinning the index card on my shirt. The major point of my personal involvement focused around what Irmscher calls "the single most important factor . . . the student-teacher relationship" (1979, p. 49). If the teacher stands back, viewing his students as so many sheep to be herded, they see him and his red pen as a lethal staff. I intended to alter the stereotype, and become a writer with them, unwittingly modifying Elbow's teacherless writing class. If this rediscovery of self were to carry the implications I asserted, I had to follow Moffett's advice, and "take the time to abstract from the ground up [therefore insuring the students could write autobiography, and would eventually] . . . learn to write exposition" (1975, p. 26). What I hoped to achieve was a level of trust that would facilitate Irmscher's "privilege to work together--on both sides . . . like student and technician working together in the laboratory" (p. 52). As a result, I explained how I was "maddening." Seeing the absence of threat, the students began to relate the underlying reasons for their word choices, and the rapport started to build, student-teacher, student-student, and student-class.

We played Strategy #18 (Simon et al., p. 171), the Values Focus Game, completing the two sentences "I feel best when . . ." and "I feel worst when . . ." After dividing into small groups, the students had five minutes to explain their responses. Three rules governed: (1) the attention of the group had to focus solely on the speaker for his time period, (2) positive reinforcement of the focus person was vital, and (3) questions and attempts to understand the speaker's reasoning were to be specifically for clarifying his position to himself and to the other group members. As I moved from group to group, fascinating self-explanations blossomed from such statements as:

I feel worst when I hear a friend believes in the word "hate."

I feel best when I know I really struggled to get an A, instead of breezing through on brown-nosing.

I feel best when I am surprised by someone's compliment about my mind.

As trust built, so did interest, and we moved to more complex strategies of values clarification. We used Strategy #34 (Simon et al., p. 232), the Magic Box, in which a box could assume any shape or size, and could contain anything, real or abstract. The students decided what they would find inside and willingly spoke about it. Inside its confines, some discovered "truth," "a book of wise sayings," "an anvil," "a tropical paradise," and "a gold ring." Soon the students' rationales for selection became incisive explanations of personal value. The golden ring, for example, greeted one girl because she thought life was perfect, having no beginning or end, which led to her underlying belief that the afterlife was her strongest motivator. The "anvil" sat inside for one boy, because he viewed himself as honing and shaping his ambition to become a lawyer. He saw that it was a difficult path and felt the determination of a blacksmith.

As the days unfolded, we enjoyed Strategy #48, in which the students were in charge of a fall-out shelter and had to choose six survivors from a list of ten personalities. Strategy #56 required them to write their own ideal obituary. Strategy #78 developed a list of contents for a suitcase that they would take to a strange land, pre-described for them. The final activity, however, I provided at their request. They wanted an intriguing impetus for an autobiographical sketch!

I entered with dittoed coats-of-arms, subdivided into six sections.

"Okay, group. You've cudgeled your brains for days now. I think you all have examined every crack and crevice in the gray matter."

Laughter. Heads squeezed between palms in mock agony. Bright inquisitive eyes. They had begun to call the class "Mental Drano," and they loved it.

"Now is the moment of truth," I intoned. "Are you who you've said you are, or are you maybe someone else? Either way, it won't matter, because your essay will be only one way you perceive yourself. Plan it however you wish. Make it short and concise or long if you want. Outline, or freewrite. It's your choice. Take a look, and get started.

The coats-of-arms (Strategy #47) were accompanied by a single sheet of of instructions. Each of the six areas required a picture or set of words, as listed below:

Area #1: Draw a picture showing your greatest personal achievement in the past.
Area #2: Write a motto that you live by.
Area #3: Draw a picture showing the greatest difference between you last year and you this year.
Area #4: Represent in words or pictures your greatest personal failure to date.
Area #5: If you died today, what three words would you want others to say about you?
Area #6: What thing, value, or emotion do you most want from others?

I stood back watching speeding pencils and pleased that they were skimming across the paper. We had prewritten for over a week, and a gold mine of ideas and beliefs had been extracted from the lode. We had, in our own way, denied Emig's assertion that "in school-sponsored writing, there is

often no time provided for this portion of the composing process" (1971, p. 92). Through our exercises and discussions, we had discovered the truth that Olney relates about writing autobiography:

> The very fact of memory and its peculiar operation, bringing back some things, neglecting other things and other times entirely, seems to argue that selfhood is not continuous, for it brings up one self here and another self there, and they are not the same as one another, nor do they even seem to the same degree selves (1972, p. 24).

Indeed, a multiplicity of selves for investigating had appeared throughout the prewriting values clarification games. But the initial confusion of "How can I be this . . . and that too?" had found a relaxed acceptance. Just as we ask the student to understand the multifacets of a Hamlet or a Jude Fawley, so had these students begun to view themselves. Also, the link between comprehension of self and understanding the literature had begun to be forged, almost indirectly. It was now time to write.

IV. Well-Oiled and Running

Andrea approaches my desk with her coat of arms complete. She glows, a smile of triumph on her cheerleader face.

"By Jove, I think I've got it!" she jokes. I smile back. Her enthusiasm seizes me.

"Do you want to discuss 'it'?" I ask.

"Yeah. What do you think about the three words I want said if I die?"

Side by side, we scrutinize. I read "hopeful," "healing," and "striving."

"I like them very much. They pin down aspects of your character that you value. How do you feel about them?"

She studies, brows knit in concentration.

"Well, they're positive, and I'm basically positive. I just get frustrated sometimes."

"Who doesn't?"

"Yeah, I know. I think I can do something here."

"Think?" I ask.

She grins. "Okay, I know I can."

"So do I, and I can't wait to see it."

She laughs and sharpens a pencil.

Conferencing is integral to making the values clarification approach hum smoothly to a good paper. Duke and Arbur both advocate teacher acceptance as a major factor in student writing conferences. Considering the delicate balance that the teacher must maintain in assisting autobiographical writing, the conference may well require a more heightened sensitivity than in other cases. Burrows links the conference to the concept of inner motivation, stating that "teachers cannot 'motivate' children to write; they can only stimulate them" (Lundsteen, 1976, p. 2). Andrea had proven Burrows' theory to be true for she indicated motivation with her opening comment, and that desire had stemmed from the stimulation of the exercises

and coat of arms.

The next morning, she angrily slams a rough draft on my desk. I look up in surprise and read:

I heal

> I have never studied medicine in any form, but I can look over my life and see that the one thing I can do is heal. My friends come to me with problems, and I listen into the dawn. I find hope in the most killing problem. I I I I I I I I I I I ————————————

She twists a ring in frustration. "What is wrong? I can't go anywhere with this. It's stupid. It's boring. I hate it!" She slouches in her chair, anger reddening her face.

"Let's not worry until we see. Okay?"

She calms as I read it again. I sense her direction and try to ask the right questions.

"Think about it for a minute. Who are you trying to let speak?"

She reads again. She pauses, and looks up.

"It sounds like a doctor or a psychiatrist, maybe?"

"I think so."

"So what can I do? I know what I want, but . . ."

"Don't make me tell you. You already know. Relax. Think about persona. We've talked about that before, and I know you understand it."

She ponders. A flash of inspiration lights her face.

"You mean, be a doctor in the sketch?"

I smile, warmed with her insight.

"By Jove, I think you've got it!"

She laughs and heaves a sigh of relief as she rushes through the door.

I think about The Comet, and wonder why it eluded him that a little work in clarification of what the student valued, and a dose of one-to-one conferencing could catapult his autobiographical assignments toward an aim of self. I reflect on Andrea. A bright, sensitive girl. She was beginning to suspect that school indeed transcended her earlier expectations of rote doldrums and long-forgotten drills. Her short sketch proved my hypothesis:

The Best Healing

> Although I have never read a medical text, or given an injection, or worn a white smock, I am a doctor in the richest sense. When my sister cries over some adolescent trial, I soothe her with balming words of comfort, or touch her face with a cool finger. My best friend Nancy calls, hysterical at midnight, and I pour into the phone an elixir of her pricelessness to those about her. I walk down the street, spying a sad old man in tatters and tremors, and I bandage him with a smile. He matters. But best of all, I know where to knead the sore muscles in myself. If I hurt, I gently rub an ointment of the greatest power in the tender spot.

> For all of my patients, I am watchful of any recurrence. I keep a vigilant eye on the pulse, and stand ready. Sometimes I fail, and the morgue welcomes a measure of soul or spirit. But I am not God, nor do I pretend to be. Such failures must happen, and the blood must stop. But I question it not, in my humility. For I am just a physician, but my dearest potion is love.

"And you didn't think you could get to the heart of yourself," I grin. "It's perfect."

She beams with pride, and tells me she rewrote it six times before it suited her. I note a blooming style, vivid imagery, clear audience, incisive editing, and self-understanding. She had won the poker hand I had lost over fifteen years ago, for she had learned to place the bet on herself. I had merely taken a role in the overall play.

I elatedly scan the other papers, hoping to see riper self-knowledge. I am not disappointed. John's self-summary has progressed from "I'm pretty uninteresting, I guess" in the first paper to "I confuse love and infatuation too easily" in the second. Cathy moves from an assertion that she is "mixed-up," to the sharper belief that she "understands a secret about coping with pressure." To varying degrees, the remainder of the stack displays a light-year of improvement; there are always those with whom the struggle is slow. But we do progress.

I sit back and revel with them in their victory.

V. Now, Where Do We Go?

I do not profess that using values clarification is the only way to help a student write more clearly and concisely. To be sure, the personal voice and beliefs sharpen through countless ways. Experiences nourish. People affect us. And writing develops us, including Moffett's "monologues, dialogues, plays, letters, diaries . . . eye-witness accounts, reporters-at-large, case studies, . . . fiction, and . . . [finally] essays" (1975, p. 25). But this progression he speaks of is simply that. If, at any stage, Andrea's mental machinery breaks down, we must halt our curricular sequence to patch up the crack. Build. Make daylight from fog. Adapt. Start from a new, or at least different beginning. And it is through this gradual comprehension of self and values that the consecutive stages of composing are best aided. In Britton's words, the adolescent needs "to become himself: to make important choices about himself" (1970a, p.272). If we help him understand those millions of selves, how much better will the comparison-and-contrast theme be, when we teach it? How much deeper will the student insight into the hearts of Holden Caulfield or Hamlet bore? I cannot help but think one word: immeasurably.

As I reflect finally on The Comet, it is ironic that an adolescent's aborted attempt to express himself became the launching pad for a teaching technique. I smile to think that he inadvertently clarified a value for me.

Reading High School
Reading Community Schools
Reading

Using Journals

Sr. Stephanie Thompson

Many teachers are using journals as a learning experience not only to help students improve their writing but also to improve their own writing. I kept a journal for five years before I assigned journal writing to my English students last September. By working with journaling, I have come to believe that students can become more fluent by making regular journal entries. More importantly, they can also learn how to reflect on their life experience and to improve their self-concept.

As I look back over my own history, journal writing has been an exciting road which has helped me look at the bits and pieces of my life to discover where I have been, where I am at the present moment, where I want to go, and how I can get there. Journal writing encompasses all the paths in my life: professional, spiritual, physical, psychological, and emotional. My journal helps me merge all these paths into one main road.

I first started keeping a journal in January of 1976. During my novitiate as a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur, I took part in a course entitled Clinical Pastoral Education, a training program for hospital chaplains. One of the twelve-week program's requirements was to keep a daily journal and to hand it in to my supervisor who read each day's entry. My journal and I struggled with each other those first few weeks. Procrastinating until late in the evening, I would then attempt to record all of the day's events. That was an impossible task! Eventually, though, my journal and I became friends. I decided to concentrate on my feelings and reactions to the high point and low point of each day. From time to time, I would also write about my relationships with some of my patients or fellow students. Reading over my journal, I discovered how much I did care about my patients and how greatly my feelings toward a person or situation could change. I also learned to reflect upon my work, using that reflection in my actions and decision-making.

After the program ended in April of 1976, I happily discovered that journal writing had become an integral part of my life. I began by using spiral bound notebooks. Later on, I discovered that I preferred writing in books with unlined pages. From 1976 to the present, I have filled eight of these volumes. I don't write every day, but, in glancing through my books, I learned it was very unusual for a week to go by without my making an entry. The road map of my life these past six years is recorded in these books. My successes and struggles with teaching, my experiences of living in community with other sisters in my order, and my growing relationships with God, family, friends, and self rest silently between the covers of these volumes. This material is safely hidden in a spot I can go back to when I want to savor it and learn from it.

The next important event in the evolution of my journal writing occurred when I took an Ira Progoff "Intensive Journal Workshop" in December of 1977. The workshop took place in a retreat-like atmosphere. When I arrived, I was given a three-ring spiral notebook with twenty labeled dividers. During the sessions we worked in different sections of the book. Each session lasted about an hour. It began with a few minutes of focusing and centering directed by the leader. This helped the participants become quiet inside so that each person could tap into his or her inner life. Progoff does not mention God, but he does talk about the well within each person which is fed by a deep, everlasting stream of water. As the weekend progressed, I was very surprised at the richness and depth in my writing and life. I did tap into and profoundly experience the deep, sturdily-constructed well within me. During the workshop I felt very much at home with God, myself, and others, even though there was little interaction among the participants.

The "Intensive Journal" gave me a framework to improve my journal writing.

I now had different types of writing exercises to use depending on the type of material with which I wished to work. The best way to learn about Progoff's journaling process is to make one; nevertheless, I want to share some of the sections and activities which I found the most helpful. These exercises, which can be used in one's own journal or adapted for classroom use, are described in greater detail in Progoff's book At A Journal Workshop (1975).

While doing research on journal writing, I discovered that I was not alone in my belief that Progoff's methods could be used with students. G. Lynn Nelson in his article entitled "Learning from Within: Ira Progoff and the Power of Personal Writing" (1978) states the following: "While the average participant at a Progoff Workshop is older than most of our students, I have found that many of the techniques can be adapted and used to help promote meaningful journal writing in the high school and college classroom" (p. 111). Furthermore, he writes:

> While this technique may seem a bit strange and awkward at first, my own journal writing and my experience in leading journal groups has shown me that it very quickly becomes a powerful method for exploring the inner significance of people and things in one's life. With young people, with all people, the technique is very helpful for seeing things from other perspectives and easily leads to new awareness and understanding. Obviously, the educational (in the fullest sense of the word) ramifications of getting young people involved in journal work of this kind are immense and incalculable; they lead off in all directions: toward greater understanding of self and others, toward deeper understanding of the fundamental nature of literature and literary techniques, toward greater sensitivity for the act of writing and its possibilities (p. 112).

The first exercise at Progoff's workshop is entitled "Now--the Open Moment." After quieting oneself, each participant is asked to get in touch with the present time period in one's life. What has been going on in this part of one's life? When did this period begin? It may have started recently, or it may have been going on for a long time. This "Now Moment" may have begun with a certain event such as a new job, an illness, or a death of a family member. By focusing on the present, a person can begin to "see" the road of one's inner life. Some of the questions Nelson uses in the classroom to get his students to describe the "Now Moment" are the following: "What does it feel like? Who are the people who are important to you? What kinds of things are you putting your energy into now? What kinds of things do you value? What are your dreams and hopes?"

While spending some time journaling in my "Now Moment" journal section, I realized that the present period in my life began when I came to the Ohio Writing Project at Miami University three weeks ago. I had been looking forward to this workshop for a long time and planned my summer accordingly. After spending three weeks here, I know my writing and my English teaching will never be the same. I feel new inside, more creative and competent. What I have learned from my fellow teachers is immeasurable! How grateful I am to them all! Beyond that, I have learned that I, too, can write a publishable article and that my students can do the same. This workshop has recharged my enthusiasm battery and helped me believe in my own competency as a writer.

"Steppingstones" is the second "Intensive Journal" activity. In the "Steppingstones" exercise one lists the ten to fifteen most significant events of one's life. Later on, one uses the list for further autobiographical exploration. In preparing this paper, I did the "Steppingstones" for my writing experience:

Pre-school--I was so proud of myself when I learned to write my name

before I went to school.

Grade school--I made various attempts at keeping a one-year diary, but I did not persevere.

Fifth grade--My article on a movie I had seen in class about the curious wonders of nature was published in my school newspaper.

Eighth grade--Sr. Angela was my English teacher. She gave us a writing assignment every night. Many of them were creative writing. We had to enter the monthly writing contest in Our Catholic Miss magazine. (I wonder how she kept up with the paper load?)

Ninth to twelfth grades--I had to do some writing in English classes. I found none of it very exciting or challenging.

Twelfth grade--Sr. Mary Seraphine made us write and write and write. Precis, poetry, short stories, themes, and essay tests are samples of what she expected me to do.

Freshman English--Ohio State University, 1968-69--I received two A's and a C in my Freshman English courses. I enjoyed most of the writing, but I worked hard for those A's.

English courses--Ohio State University, Summer 1972--After I graduated with a teaching field in French, I went back to school to become certified in English. I wrote papers for the first time and enjoyed it after I had narrowed down the topic. I was always procrastinating with my writing.

January-April, 1976--I wrote a daily journal entry and two verbatims per week for the chaplaincy training program I was taking.

December 1977--"Intensive Journal Workshop."

Summer 1979, Wright State University--Class in Advanced Composition for Elementary Teachers. I did a lot of creative writing. For the first time I began to enjoy poetry writing.

Summer 1979--I made a "Career Life-planning Workshop" where I learned "Skill-Identification."

Summer 1982, Miami University--Ohio Writing Project.

These experiences have had a strong effect upon my writing. If I wanted to learn more about the impact a specific event has had on my life, I could use another one of Progoff's techniques entitled "Dialoguing," "carrying on a conversation in the journal with anyone or anything that evokes a need or a desire to do so" (Nelson, p.112). In an "Intensive Journal" notebook there are sections for dialoguing with persons, works, events, society, and the body.

In addition to Progoff, there are other excellent books on journal writing. Morton Kelsey's Adventure Inward and George F. Simons' Keeping Your Personal Journal both suggest aids for getting started in journaling. They include topics which would be suitable for use in a high school class. Another idea-filled resource is Canfield and Wells' 100 Ways to Enhance Self-Concept in the Classroom, a delightfully helpful book for teachers of elementary and high school students, with ideas such as:

1. "Ask students to write an autobiography of their hair. It is to be written as if their hair were the author. They should describe all the major events and changes in their lives as their ha[illegible]"

2. "Ask the students to list who their heroes or heroines were when they were in elementary and junior high schools. Who were the bullies in their neighborhood? Who were their friends?"

3. "Who has been most influential in shaping their lives to date?"

4. "Have them write about the special events of their lives--both good and bad. How did they affect them when they occurred? How do they affect them now?" (p. 23).

How do I use journals in my classroom? Last year I decided to have students do free writing in their journals for the first ten minutes of every

class. At the end of each week I collected their past week's journal entries which were kept on looseleaf in a section of their spiral binder English notebooks. If a student did not want me to read a particular journal entry, she folded the paper in half. Usually, I did not write comments on the entries, and I did not grade on mechanics, but only on whether students had written in the journal each day. During the first month or two of school, I somehow seemed to find the time to read four hours of journals over the weekend. Some were repetitive and boring, but I could see a real improvement in other students' writing. A very close bond developed in the classes where I was using journals. I discovered more about adolescent psychology from their writing than I had ever learned in a course, I became a more tolerant and understanding teacher, and I now know more about "where the kids are coming from" and some of the difficulties they deal with at home and at school.

Every three or four weeks I asked my students to re-read what they had written. Then, they were to complete this statement: "While reading my journal, I learned that I. . . ." Many students were surprised how much their feelings had changed during those weeks. Others noted how much they talked about school, sports, or their boyfriends. My goal was being realized. Students were beginning to reflect upon their own experience and were learning more about their inner selves.

I also used the journal at other times during the class period as a springboard for prewriting. The following are examples: brainstorming, descriptive writing, answers to values clarification questions, or dreaming. (Dreaming exercises are good ways of evaluating specific class periods or courses. For example, I asked students to design their ideal American Literature course.) Another use of the journal which I have found helpful with quiet groups is to have students write an answer to a pre-reading motivation question before I begin the literature selection. This exercise gives students enough time to gather their thoughts. Writing down an answer provides added security for the shy student who might hesitate to say anything without the paper as a reference.

The journal works well as a learning, owning, and retention aid. By asking a student to write down what she has learned on a particular day, I am forcing her to recall what we worked on in class. Possibly, she will synthesize the material by reviewing it on paper. I believe students know much more than they think they know. The secret is to find the key that unlocks their own belief in their ability to learn and to retain what they have learned. So far, the journal is the best tool I have found to accomplish this task.

These past few weeks I have done much reading on journal writing and have gained many insights into the writing process. Ultimately, the two important questions for me and my fellow teachers are the following: "Why do I keep a journal and why do I ask my students to keep one?" It is good for me and for them, but my motivation for doing it needs to be more clearly focused. How is it good? Why didn't I stop keeping a journal when I no longer had to hand it in to my supervisor back in 1976? I have been ruminating upon the answers to these questions. St. Exupery once said, "It is only with the heart that one sees rightly. What is essential is invisible to the eye." My journaling helps me go beyond what is "invisible to the eye." It can be a key, unlocking the doors which block my "seeing things" with my "heart." The journal process is a way for me to gain a clearer perspective about my world, my life, and who I am. If one has discipline and is faithful to the unfolding of one's inner self, journal keeping is an exciting, life-giving process. This process is as mysterious as life itself can be at times. It is this mystery and wonder I wish to share with my students.

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Lifting the Hex: A Writing Approach to the Teaching of Remedial Reading

Kathleen Underwood

Somewhere, in the child still within me, a belief in magic flickers faintly. Some simpler me wants to believe that, if the magic incantation is just right, things that cannot be, will be. Each time the embers of credence appear cold and dead, a breath of the unbelievable fans them to flame again. Three years ago, that breath caused a resurgence of belief to glow again, for magic occurred in a most unlikely place. My remedial reading class.

Each day I spend part of my time laboriously trying to improve the reading skills of children a year or more below grade level. It is an hour of battle. Each year I put more emphasis on what has seemed workable in the past. But the methods never fully worked, never allowed the bulk of the class to catch up to grade level.

Three years ago a summer workshop, which included Daniel Fader as a speaker, convinced me to increase writing in all my classes, particularly as a part of my reading program. Why not? I'd tried everything else.

So we wrote that year, though writing wasn't easily incorporated into the classwork. To my surprise, the end-of-the-year achievement scores were higher than those of any previous class. Since everything done in the class was essentially the same as in other years, it seemed within reason to credit writing with some of the improvement. Writing was the single most successful method I had ever tried.

I had hoped for the class to achieve five objectives:

1. An increase in writing and reading fluency.
2. An increase in reading, writing, and speaking vocabulary.
3. More accurate mechanics.
4. An opportunity to experience different kinds of writing for different purposes.
5. An improvement in self-image through achievements in writing.

They did. By the end of the year, most of the class could write a fairly good paragraph. They could find the words to say what they meant most of the time. And--best of all--they liked doing it. It was more than I had hoped for.

To understand my glee, you must understand the students. On the morning of the first day of each school year, my remedial reading class is only a list of names. As I assign books to the Lisas and Debbies, Terrys and Marks, I know what, if not who, they will be. About a fourth of the group will be children whose true ability is inadequate to the task of completing the amount of work arbitrarily designated as one school year's work.

Another fourth of the kids will be officially classified as "learning disabled." These children will spend a part of each day with an LD teacher, and a part of the day mainstreamed. Their variety of disabilities may include hyperactivity, physical impairments, or a selective difficulty in some specific task area. This is frequently labeled "perceptual disorder," a catch-all term meaning that the child experiences some hitch in the process of encoding or decoding. The child fails or falters in one or more of the functions of reception, recognition, interpretation, classification, or storage in long- or short-term memory.

Another quarter of the group, possibly more, will be undiagnosed as learning disabled, but will exhibit the same behavior as those so identified. The child may have compensated in some workable, though less-than-ideal way,

and thus have escaped classification and its attendant remediation. These are average- to high-average-ability kids who may emerge as real school phobics by the time they reach fifth grade. They are bright enough to know they aren't stupid, but unable to understand why they always end up in the "dumb" class. After a year or two they give up. Frustrated, misunderstood, self-doubting, these kids are one of the largest untapped resources in our classrooms. At ten or eleven they are wise to all the tricks to make them perform, and have quite effectively become what we've been telling them they are: failures.

The last group will be children whose backgrounds fit them only for loser's status. These are the poor, disadvantaged, nonwhites, those from subsidized housing, welfare homes, and single parent families. They are foster children, the truants, the children fast becoming delinquent. They arrive with a set of values that places education far behind other priorities. They are usually poorly nourished, over-sugared, and either painfully thin or verging on obesity. With scarcely a decade of life behind them, they exist in a lonely fringe area outside the boundaries of peer acceptance.

Many of these children hate school, except where school may be less stressful than home. My class will share a blanket distaste for reading and a deep antipathy for teachers, with reading teachers heading the list. As repugnant, however, as reading is, it is not as hateful as writing. Writing--with its inevitable errors--crystallizes all their problems. There for all the world to see is the stigma the remedial child knows he bears. Langer (1982) has observed that asking children to write causes a shift in emphasis, making the child overly aware of rules of language.

In other words, to begin a writing program with a group like this was akin to hawking thermal undies in hell. The initial reaction of my class was horror. Most of them had sufficient trouble with writing just a sentence. And now they were expected to write fifteen minutes or more every day? Our first activities would have to be easy, interesting, nonthreatening, with guaranteed success built in. Not easy. Linda Geller (1982) suggests children should learn about language through manipulations of its forms in play. So our writing should be fun, too.

Our class began with a writing time every day. When everyone was present and seated--I'd hope--we would begin. Sometimes I asked a question they'd be sure to respond to. "What's the best kind of pet to have?" or "What holiday is the most fun?" or "Which sport takes the greatest amount of skill to play well?" Responses were taken brainstorming fashion, or, perhaps a preferable term, fact-storming, as Hennings (1982) calls it. There were no rules except to repeat the information until I wrote the response on the board. This did three things I considered important: it freed them of recitation formalities that already shackled their days, it encouraged participation of the reluctant kid who rarely raised a hand to volunteer answers, and it gave them a base of information from which to work when they began writing. Writing is a reaction to some happening, Boiarsky (1982) states. Our period of oral prewriting helped to clarify experiences and gave a list of words that they could use when they wrote.

Some of the earliest writing consisted of just lists--lists that I knew they could make (see Dyson, 1981). We listed our best and worst pets, the things we liked and disliked, gifts wanted and not wanted. Later we wrote descriptive words and phrases about the words on our lists, and from these we developed statements or questions. Then we took a long step to paragraphs. The transitions were important, because such children are wary of sudden moves.

As early as the writing of lists, we began using words that would express feeling, and trying to upgrade the quality of descriptive words. Giacobbe and Graves (1982) say that the growth of children results from their awareness of what they're doing and this in turn leads to confidence in what they do. One tool for effecting this awareness was catching someone doing something well and saying so. Remedial readers aren't inundated with praise and approval,

and it becomes a powerful shaper when used honestly and made very personal.

As we progressed slowly and at an uneven rate, we began to branch out. Using the easier activities as a springboard to later and more involved writing, I began to design their activities from the books and materials that I had been researching. I also put to use ideas from workshops, lectures, and ideas from any other teacher who would share.

As the days passed, I noticed that my class arrived more promptly, settled down more quickly, and, almost daily, complained that they were not given enough time to write. When I met them in the hall or lunchroom, they frequently asked, "What are we going to write about today?"

When this level of acceptance and interest had been reached, we began to work at revision. Thus far I had not stressed any of the mechanics of writing beyond recognizing the work that was relatively error-free. Some of the children were concerned about spelling; some were not. When they wanted a word spelled, they came to me with a piece of paper and pencil, asked for the word, and I wrote it for them. There was no question of their finding the words in the dictionary. It would have been terribly difficult for them, and would have killed their writing enthusiasm. When I couldn't understand their words, they read them to me--if they could!

Work was shared orally if and when the writer desired. Some always shared; some never did. I sometimes read their work orally with the author's permission. As the class began to work on revision, we set aside a bulletin board where each child had a 9 x 12 sheet of paper in his favorite color. The child's name was at the top of the paper, and this was where revised work was posted to share with others. They chose the work they wanted to revise, put it on 5 x 8 file cards, and changed their selections at will. We tried for revision of the content as well as mechanics. They were willing to improve their work if it was to be seen by others, but that does not mean the work was perfectly done. The revised version was better than the original, most of the time. Editing was done by the child, by a group of children, and through very short conferences. We also used combined paragraphs to form longer works, and these were corrected by the group. This is a method suggested by Hennings (1982) as one way to edit with children.

If the child still had grammatical or punctuation errors after he'd revised and rewritten, they were left. As we wrote more and more, errors declined for most of the writers. Holbrook (1981) concludes that giving children increased control over the extent and accuracy of revision leads to improvements as they encounter the same words and the same usage more often. My own students did seem to learn about some of their problems, and their accuracy did increase.

The bulletin board did wonders. Even the child too shy to share orally or to allow me to read the work would willingly put finished writing on this display. An unexpected result was the attraction it held for students from my homeroom and my math class. They checked almost daily for new postings and were quite vocal in their approval. This was one of the most valuable things that happened that year, and one I could not have engineered. Peer approval, particularly of schoolwork, is rarely directed toward remedial kids.

We also varied the kinds of writing as confidence increased. We wrote explanations, used writing to expand on reading done in basal and supplementary readers, wrote seriously and with hilarity. Quite regularly, we wrote on sports, cars, or motorcycles, since these were the subjects the students often chose when they were given free choice. Petty (1978) cites the work of Melas (1974) on comparison of composition themes chosen by students and those assigned by teachers. Melas found that teachers did not usually assign the same subjects for writing that children chose. One of the sources of themes for my class was their work when they had the choice of what to write about. Some very good work resulted from this emphasis on their favorite topics. One

of the boys became so engrossed in an imaginary animal he invented that we got a whole series of stories about the Meggledybopp--his food, his environment, habits, personality, and adventures.

Little has been written on the topic of writing to enhance remedial reading, between Sylvia Ashton-Warner's Teacher (1963), which includes writing as part of an "organic" approach to reading, and 1980. But recently, more researchers affirm my own conclusion that writing does enhance reading skills in remedial classes. The gains in my classes have been impressive, partly, I suspect, because the children begin to feel better about themselves when they see improvement in writing. The feelings turn into better test scores. But maybe more important, they turn into smiles, looks of satisfaction, and eagerness. Real magic indeed.

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Computers in the English Classroom

Mary Ann Malone

"The future is now" runs one company's slogan, and that's never been truer for English teachers. Picture this scenario: the principal, Mr. Retupmoc, calls Miss Byte into his office. "Miss Byte, we have spent the summer selecting computers and planning our computer science lab. Now we are ready to purchase quality software for each department. This must be available when the students have completed their computer literacy course. A committee will review and decide upon software packages. I would like for you to represent the English department on this committee."

Sound familiar? If not, don't breathe a sigh of relief. Your chances are excellent for assuming Miss Byte's role for your department. Therefore, you need to be aware of the available software for English classrooms and some criteria for judging what is high caliber software.

Although English software is in the rudimentary stages of development, computer-assisted programs (CAI) are being lesson-planned into the curriculum of kindergarten playrooms through college campuses. One of the "traditional" computer programs is the language arts and spelling drill which includes spelling, word usage, grammar, and punctuation. Because of their flexibility, they are proving to be very effective teaching tools:

1. The students control the process. They can choose modules from a number of lessons and can start and stop at any time and at any part of the program.

2. Problems are geared to the individual. Students who catch on quickly will gain immediate rewards. Students who do not catch on quickly will have patient tutors and full explanations for each wrong answer.

3. The form provides conducive learning. Problems are drawn randomly from a large data base, so memorizing right answers and using up the teacher's supply of good examples, patience, and time is impossible.

4. Motivation will run high if the students know that their improvement in grammar or spelling on the computer will improve their grade.

5. Peer tutoring, which accounts for much of the child's learning, can be used very effectively with the computer.

6. Those children who find it difficult to participate in classroom drills because of the fear of ridicule or failure in front of peers will find this grammar drill nonthreatening.

7. Lastly, children love computer games--evidenced by the universal obsession with Pac-Man, Space Invaders, and others. Toward the end of the daily lesson, the student is allowed to select an educational game such as Wordwar, Talkomatic, or Hangman to reinforce the skills taught in the lessons.

While grammar drills or linear programs have been the frontrunners, only now are dynamic interactive systems being developed. Some various drills in spelling have been introduced and are good. However, it is important that the program allows the student to see similarities or patterns among words, just as the sculptor crudely carves the block of wood only to retrace his movements

with finer, more intricate strokes. Computer programs for the writing process should follow this logical sequence--programs that foster fluency followed by programs that refine that fluency.

Learning to use written language effectively involves learning the special demands placed on the writer. In spoken language communication is face to face; the speaker can get immediate feedback from the listener as to the clarity of his/her message and can insure maximum communication. In written language the audience is absent; the child has no way of knowing how well the message is being received. Thus, it is vitally necessary that the written message be clear, explicit, and as unambiguous as possible. Interactive computers lend themselves well to the teaching of these skills in the following ways:

1. Students compose stories on computer terminals.
2. Teachers use a theoretically based framework and simple computer language to give feedback to students about their writing.
3. Students use a text editing system to revise their written product.
4. This composing/reacting/editing cycle can be repeated as often as is appropriate for the developmental level of the child.
5. Students can print out their finished writing and share their stories.

(Wall and Taylor, 1982, p. 15)

Donald Murray says that writing is rewriting. It is the difference between the amateur and the professional, the unpublished and published (1978, p. 85). However, most students view revision as burdensome. Because of its simple procedure, text editing on the computer overcomes some of this problem, and children enjoy revamping and revising. Several researchers, for instance, are teaching kindergartners and first graders to write via the computer. Rich Hofmann, a professor at Miami University, is finding that computers have greatly increased the fluency of elementary school children. John Henry Martin, another computer specialist, finds that what children say is important to them When their messages are written, they are eager to translate them, so they are motivated to read better. Brandt, who interviewed Martin, quotes him:

> you take the drudgery and frustration of ignorance out of school, then schools become beautiful places for children to grow up, to learn the joy of living, to learn the beauty of things in this world, to live with each other compassionately in ward and affectionate relations (1981, p. 63).

And that's what computers can help us accomplish.

In the future, computers can perhaps offer some relief from the relentless paper load. In 1965, Ellis Page conducted a study called "Project Essay Grade." Essays were written by students in grades 8-12 and judged by four highly qualified English teachers. Computer programs were then written to measure the following in each essay:

> whether a title was present, average sentence length, number of paragraphs, subject-verb openings, length of essay in words, average word length, standard deviation of sentence length, numbers of paentheses, apostrophes, commas, periods, underlined words, dashes, semi-colons, quotation marks, connective words, exclamation points, question marks, prepositions, spelling errors, relative pronouns, subordinating conjunctions, common words on the Dale list, hyphens, slashes, etc. (Levy and Fritz, 1972, p. 3).

The computers then assigned grades to the papers. In a startling outcome, the computer-assigned grades were statistically indistinguishable from those assigned by the expert judges. Then, in 1966, Page broadened his categories and conducted another study to include ideas, organization, style, mechanics, and creativity. Computers once again judged the essays reliably.

Another dynamic interacting system which now exists is the poetry-generating program. The principal use is not to create immortal verse but to let students explore the elements of poetry. They must be able to define, give examples, discriminate between, and label examples of metaphor, alliteration, onomatopoeia, assonance, and hyperbole. Throughout the stages are sample, criterion, and eliciting frames. The final stage is putting together these elements in a unique poetic form.

My focus thus far has centered on student programs. However, the computer can be a valuable tool for you. Teachers who use computerized grade books are finding that they save many valuable hours. One study found that teachers spent an average of one hundred and twenty-five hours a year to do gradekeeping manually as compared with only two hours by computer. Furthermore, in your study and research, you should take advantage of the aid the computer may give as to the storage and retrieval of scholarly information. You can go over the lengthy list of related documents stored by the publishers in computer memory banks, select those documents you need for your own courses, and get them as printouts. Thus, you have access to resources you might never have amassed in a lifetime of traditional research.

A few other ways the computer can make your school life easier: class profiles which give you an overview of class progress throughout your English curriculum; suggestions for grouping students to meet educational objectives most effectively; and reports to parents, including suggestions for activities at home to supplement school instruction.

Unfortunately, the current available English programs are few in number. This scarcity is one reason why computer literacy is so crucial to English teachers. By studying the computer, its language and programming possibilities, you can determine the future direction of computer use in your English classroom. If writing programs is not for you, then check thoroughly for all the courseware that is available for your computer. Good references include Wang's Index, Computers and the Humanities, Pipeline, or newsletters of special interest groups such as SIGLASH (Language Analysis and Studies in the Humanities).

While our Miss Byte is not part of the decision-making committee on hardware, you very well could be. If so, please consider the type of computer system other schools in your area have. Sharing each other's expertise and software is very important. Furthermore, you must purchase software carefully. Don't buy it just because it is an English program, and there is a paucity of English programs. Keep in mind a number of questions as you make your selections: Is the software well-documented? If the package says, "Develops fundamental spelling skills," what are these skills? Is the software appropriate for your school's computer? Does the software exploit your machine's capabilities? Input can be through paddles, joysticks, light pen, keyboards. Output can be as graphics, animation, color and sound, or via interface, tape, video recorder, or slide projector. Will the user be able to use the program easily and comfortably? Will the program motivate both males and females? Is the subject matter accurate, complete, and properly sequenced? Does the software promote computer literacy? What values does the software reinforce?

Finally, don't be afraid to experiment and to explore. Computers will not go away, and those of us who wish them to are ignoring their immense capabilities. Yes, we must take control and, like Miss Byte, actually let the computer assist us in becoming more effective English teachers.

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Creative Lying to Enhance Creative Writing

Jim G. Rowland

"Write about your summer vacation," you tell them. "Write a brief autobiography of yourself, or an introduction for a good friend." "Write about your favorite hobby." Like the rest of us who teach composition, you've probably given assignments like these a thousand times, especially when you find yourself teaching creative writing. But, let's face it, they are ploys that consume class time, bits and pieces of assignments waiting for a framework to be hung on. So after you use up all your bits and pieces, where do you go? What do you do?

I'd like to suggest that you teach fabrication--lying, if you will. Your students have been at it since they were two. They know the ins and outs of it. They know that the effectiveness of a lie depends on a multitude of actors sequenced and embellished to produce credibility. And you can build on that knowledge to teach other elements of creative writing, to give your course a framework.

Since lie is usually used pejoratively, let me explain myself more fully. A lie is not bad because of its structure but because of its intent--which may be to deceive harmfully or to damage. Otherwise, untruth has many legitimate purposes. Well-wrought lies, in fact, can often illustrate and define basic truths. We call such lies parables, or hypotheses, or fictions. Moreover, they are entertaining, exciting, and even convincing. They contain all the elements of good narration--carefully structured, logical plots; conflict and climax; appropriate setting and characters; corroborative details; and strong audience identification.

Audience awareness is important for successful liars. They must always consider who is in the audience. How much do they know? How much are they interested? What is their particular interest in this story? Is it personal, or is it businesslike? Similarly, liars must consider and reconsider their own roles. From what point of view are they telling the story, and how might this color or alter details?

Let us consider for a moment the dilemma of an impersonator--an impostor living a lie. The smallest detail becomes incredibly important. His very existence in the role depends on his ability to anticipate questions, either stated or unstated, to identify areas where he might be unable to cover himself, and to create devices by which to avoid those areas. This last gambit is also used by tellers of fantasy stories which require at least a degree of credibility to achieve their effect. Times, places, characters, and situations which might compromise the story are simply kept vague or never told. Starting with "once upon a time" is probably the simplest device for creating vagueness. With it, the author obscures the time frame and interrupts the chain of thought which might sequence into a destructive question. It might have been trillions of years ago--in another galaxy maybe, or time-warp. It could be millions of years into the future. It could be now. The important thing is that the answer is left up to the reader or auditor, and the storyteller avoids the risk of unnecessary exposure.

If an author of a fantasy were to begin, "In February of nineteen forty-seven there lived in Terre Haute, Indiana, a three-headed monster who turned people into stone," he would require too much credulousness of the reader. His attempt at fantastic storytelling would be relegated to the comic book genre, where logical thinking is neither required nor desired.

Just as the impostor must obscure certain facts, he must also know at least the rudiments of the craft or position he pretends to. Most importantly, he must be thoroughly familiar with the current jargon and procedures and must be ready to tailor his story for different people and situations. If it all

seems like too much to deal with, too complicated and tricky, remember that we all change personalities to suit different circumstances. And rather ordinary people have carried off great impersonations.

Who can forget that Clifford Irving came within an ace of pulling off a profitable literary scam by producing a bogus biography supposedly based on a series of personal interviews with the elusive Howard Hughes? The authors created a story covering the acquisition of the interviews that, although questionable, was so appropriately tied to Hughes' well-known passion for security and privacy as to defy outright disproving. So familiar did they become with the known facts that they were able to role-play, alternately assuming the role of Hughes while the other partner assumed the role of interviewer, asking every question he might have asked the real Hughes. Each question was answered as they thought he might answer it, copying speech and thought patterns and mixing factual and imaginary information. The point is that they were able to create a fabrication which effectively fooled everyone except Hughes and those few closest to him. And, it was damned interesting.

Now it is time to try turning these ideas to the advantage of our students as authors. In short, let's tell a story and do as well as we can by imagining, regardless of the content, that it is important lie. To add a dimension of interest, let us assume that our lie could be extremely harmful, even dangerous to us personally if we were to fail with it.

Here is a sample of the lie-telling technique applied to a writing exercise which asks for a reasonable explanation of an obvious untruth. This type of exercise will allow us to stretch our lying muscles a bit, getting us ready to tell a big one with plot and coherence.

FISH GROW ON TREES

For the writing teacher:

This exercise asks students to write a good paragraph of argument but with a little twist. They have to make a good case for an obvious lie.

PROCEDURE

1. Tell the students that they will have to build an argument around a topic that you will assign.

2. You may have all students write on a single topic or allow them to choose one from a list.
   Examples:
   - prove that fish live in trees.
   - prove that spaghetti grows on bushes.
   - prove that there can be no such thing as a seedless orange.
   - prove that bananas are packaged in their skins by humans.
   - prove that it is impossible for the bumblee to fly.

3. Remember that this is an exercise to increase arguing skill. Share the writing and the fun.

VARIATIONS

1. Disprove a truth.

2. Have students make up believable lies and convince the class of their truth.

3. Personify some large abstraction or institution (Infinity, Beauty, Chicago, God, Mississippi) and write about it as if it were a person you know very well.

After these warming-up exercises have been accomplished, we can begin to really get into the spirit of the thing. It must be emphasized that what is produced is not a story. It is an exercise which strengthens only specialized writing muscles. We can now plunge into the craftsmanship required of story authors by taking into consideration the basic elements of story-telling: plot (beginning, middle, end, conflict, crisis, climax, denouement), setting, time frame, characterization, and dialogue. The difference is that we are going to consider these elements, along with any others you might wish, as anticipatory questions concerned with protecting our story from being discovered untrue.

We begin by anticipating the obvious questions which might weaken or threaten the veracity of our story. Let's make a list of such questions. The list can be as long and detailed as you like, depending on how good a storyteller you are and how important the story is to you. Here is a short sample:

1. What happened? (Plot)
2. How did it happen? (Plot)
3. Where? (Setting)
4. When? (Time frame)
5. What were you doing there? (Plot-Setting)
6. Who else was there? (Characters)
7. What facts could be easily checked?
8. How did it all turn out? (Climax)

While these questions are being considered, they should be interwoven with some logical sounding circumstances. The setting should be carefully coordinated with your story. The time frame should fit circumstances of plot and setting. Your characters should fit and not threaten the credibility of the components. Above all, don't hem yourself in with some easily disproved contentions.

We must, of course, decide upon our own role as storyteller. (It is often easier in the beginning to select a first-person point of view and a situation that students can easily identify with.) The next step is to identify the audience to which the story will be presented. As we have noted, this is a very important step, so no shoddy workmanship here. Consider that the audience, if it is an important one to us, is probably close enough to us to have a store of significant information about us in their mental computers. We must therefore craft our story carefully around and through these obstacles so that doubts are not confirmed by comparing the details to known personality traits or habits.

The following exercise is designed in an attempt to pull together all the considerations we have discussed in the preceding pages. Warn the students to proceed with care, giving serious thought to ramification and possible traps either obvious or implied in the answers.

A SLIGHT CASE OF NAME DROPPING

This exercise will require you to assume that you are yourself. The idea is to try to pull off the following lie convincingly: "Sir Laurence Olivier paid me a very nice compliment." This is a typical name-dropping routine, which could really work, if you handle it properly. Mark the answer you feel you personally could best get away with.

Sir Laurence Olivier paid me a nice compliment:
a. Last night
b. Last week
c. Some months ago
d. Back in thirty seven

I saw Sir Laurence's "Best of Shakespeare" show:
a. At McDonald's restaurant in Batavia
b. In Peebles, Ohio
c. In an off-broadway theatre in NYC
d. At the Old Vic in London

On stage with him was (were):
a. Sir John Gielgud
b. Natalie Wood
c. Huey, Dewey, and Louie
d. Marlon Brando

I found myself face to face with Olivier:
a. When he leaped off the stage and started shaking hands
b. At dinner after the performance
c. As we shared a pizza downstage left
d. When I sneaked backstage and happened on him going to his dressing room

When he saw me, he:
a. Embraced me warmly
b. Invited me to watch him dress
c. Tried to get around me as politely as possible
d. Asked me what the hell I thought I was doing

I seized the opportunity to:
a. Tell him he was great and my favorite actor
b. Tell him he was a little weak in the Hamlet scene
c. Kiss his ring
d. Ask him where the men's room was located

I was in town because:
a. It was the last day of my European tour
b. My company had sent me there on business
c. I'm a member of the jet set and fly to lots of places
d. I was just bumming around

I couldn't help noticing that Sir Laurence:
a. Had terrific BO
b. Was heavily made up
c. Was really impressed with me
d. Was only three feet tall

When I asked him if there were anything I could possibly do for him, he replied:
a. I could get the hell out of his way
b. I could join his touring company in a major role
c. I could stay as nice as I obviously was
d. I should meet him later to discuss my opinion of his work

My meeting with Sir Laurence was:
a. The very highest point of my life
b. A most pleasant accident for him
c. Something of a disappointment
d. One of my most memorable incidents

HOLD IT!

Now, fill in the blanks with your selections and arrange your story in what you think to be the best order.

1. Sir Laurence Olivier paid me a nice compliment _____.

2. I saw Sir Laurence's Best of Shakespeare show _____.

3. On the stage with him was (were) _____.

4. I found myself face to face with him when _____.

5. I was in town because _____.

6. When he saw me, he _____.

7. When I asked him if there were anything I could possibly do for him, he replied that: _____.

8. I couldn't help noticing that he _____.

9. My meeting with Sir Laurence was _____.

10. I seized the opportunity to _____.

Now, combine all those short sentences into a paragraph or two. Add any details you think might help and that you can get away with.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The only remaining step is to encourage participants to create a story all their own, using the suggested steps, and based on a clear statement of the untruth (or truth) which we wish to impress on our audience. An example might be: "I am five hours late getting home and smell like alcohol because I was forcibly detained by some unidentified drunks who forced a beer down me." Or some such improbability which the student invents.

These thoughts and suggestions may provide a tool which will enhance the teaching of story-writing both for the instructor and the students. I hope you'll try them. They might provide the framework you need to teach creative writing.

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Taking the Pain Out of Grammar

Oran R. Adams

I have engaged many times in some version of the following conversation with students:

> "You shouldn't say ain't because people will think you uneducated."
>
> "Naw, my old man says ain't all the time, and he ain't stupid 'cause he makes more money than you do."
>
> "Yes, . . . but."

The student smiles, realizing she has won.

What she probably doesn't realize is that research seems to indicate that the teaching of grammar may in fact be ineffectual. Probably it has no effect upon student writing and may indeed be harmful, leading me to be unsure of whether or not I should be teaching grammar in the first place. Like other English teachers, I find it easy to eliminate grammar altogether, rather than facing up to the problem of taking the pain out of grammar and making it an effective part of my curriculum.

There are reasons for knowing grammar. Surely, it is a tool for the writer. As Peter Elbow (1973) indicates, grammar may not be useful during the prewriting stage, but it is necessary for the final stage of editing (p. 137). Campbell (1977) agrees, noting that writers should understand "the systematic nature of Edited American English" (p. 62).

But if grammar is to remain a part of the English curriculum, as I believe it should, how can I best teach it? One way is through peer editing groups. As a practical example of peer editing, consider the following rough draft of a paragraph written for me by one of my poorer students:

> Most everyone always has some folk hero they consider brave, hones, or admirable in someway. Johnny Appleseed was one of these. People admired him for what he did. He would go about North America spreading apple see. He would not accept charity or ask for it. He would give people the shirt off his back. He would sleep out among snakes, lizards, etc. People would offer to let him sleep in their house but he would refuse.

Peer editors would, I think, point out several grammar errors, probably with far greater impact upon this student than any formal blackboard grammar lesson. They would likely correct his spelling errors, his comma mistakes, and his problem with pronoun usage; and they might even show him how to combine some of his weak sentences into stronger, more effective sentences.

A second method I use to eliminate the pain of grammar is to eliminate "AWK" and other red marks from my grading vocabulary, since any mark I put on a paper indicating a grammar mistake is viewed by the student as a negative response, exactly the response that I don't want to evoke. Rather than marking up papers with a sea of red ink, I have more success in getting positive responses from students by keeping a list of errors from a set of papers. Then I select one, two, or three grammar items to discuss in class. When I comment on papers, I put small marginal checks by the errors to be discussed in class. Students respond better to this method because it is nonthreatening.

Third, I use conferences to take away the pain of grammar. In individual conferences, mistakes are not held up in front of the class for the whole world to see. Most students will appreciate greatly being quietly and privately

shown some better way to use grammar to improve their writing. Conferences also allow teachers to focus directly on the most crucial individual problems. In the student passage cited earlier, I would probably discuss the use of pronouns. This discussion might very easily lead to the rewriting of some of his sentences in order to eliminate the repetition of the pronoun he. The idea is to get students to understand grammar is a useful tool, not merely a list of rules.

A fourth method seems so obvious that I hesitate to mention it. Teach grammar when the opportunity arises. For example, any discussion of prose has countless opportunities to show how a writer has used punctuation effectively. I will find many examples of good usage of the series, skillful placement of adverbs, careful subordination, correct coordination, and the like. I can usually find ineffective examples also. Poetry has all sorts of possibilities for discussing grammar in relation to writing. Why is the punctuation what it is? Where or what are the subjects and predicates? What modifies what? What is the logical progression of thought? All of these questions, and many more, will have the students discussing grammar without even knowing they are doing so.

I once mentioned, quite offhand, during a discussion of Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" that editors had a habit of changing Frost's punctuation. The class found this hard to believe and debated at some length the merits of alternative punctuation. We had an excellent lesson in grammar and writing. Had I stuck rigidly to my lesson plan, that lesson would never have occurred.

Sometimes I declare a correct-speech day. Normally, it is bad practice to correct a student's speech in class; it reduces student participation. But, if you make correct-speech day a game to be won by those making the fewest errors, students will become careful with their choice of words and use of grammar. In the spirit of the game, they will participate.

Finally, the greatest single source of grammar pain is the formal workbook or grammar lesson. Most find this type of work sheer drudgery, particularly when it is assigned as homework. So I use workbook exercises in class with far more positive results. I can see that each student actually does his or her own work. I can more readily identify group and individual problems. I can work with individuals. In short, I can teach grammar. This approach also frees students' homework time for more writing, one of my primary goals. After the students have done a workbook exercise, I give a little prize for the day's best recitation--a candy bar or some little extra privilege. I try to structure what constitutes winning in such a way that even the poorest student has a chance of winning; perhaps the winner will be the student who shows the most improvement.

Obviously, grammar is not all fun and games. Understanding any discipline requires hard work. However, it is possible to improve the attitude of many students, to make the mysteries of grammar a little less impregnable. Students who understand and enjoy grammar will respond and use grammar as a tool for better writing.

And so, as I approach the new school year, armed with reasons to teach grammar and a carefully planned battle strategy, I am not planning to stop that kid with the rich, illiterate father to explain why she should study grammar, but I hope she learns why it will be useful to her. At any rate, I'm not going to say "Yes, . . . but" anymore.

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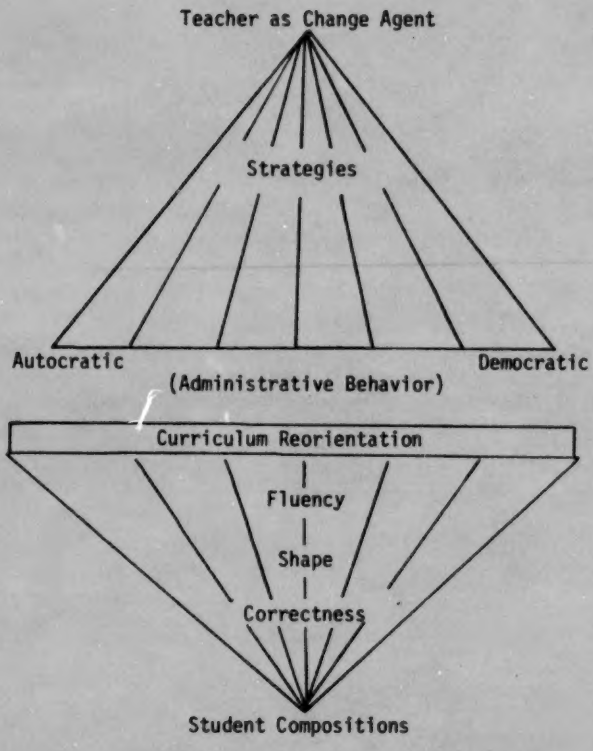
Confronting the Administration with New Ideas in Composition

John Kreis



"I thought that fragment was particularly effective." Those words slammed through the walls that had been my standards for proper English usage. How could a fragment ever work? A sentence or dependent clause could certainly be substituted just as effectively--and far more acceptably I thought. To even suggest the possibility of leaving it stand and labeling it effective was, I felt, literary heresy. I began at that time to see the problem in its true perspective. Confronting the administration with the new ideas espoused in the Ohio Writing Project will require special consideration.

The Ohio Writing Project is not proposing a rededication to the traditional efforts in composition; it is advancing a new philosophy for teaching composition. A philosophy which sees writing as a discovery process and places fluency, shape, and personal involvement ahead of correctness (Moffett, 1968). Confronting the administration, therefore, will not be a matter of convincing the power structure to shift from one teaching alternative to another equally

familiar alternative, but the selling of a composition philosophy which may well, by its nature, be questioned by administrators, boards, and the public.

The task, therefore, is complicated. First, we must convince the administration of the validity of the process we propose to implement in the school. Once that is accomplished, we must convince them to in fact implement the change we propose.

I will consider these topics in reverse order. I believe the strategies we need to develop to insure our chance for implementation may provide guidelines as to how we might best sell the validity of the process. I will begin by examining the various administrative styles and how different administrative styles require different strategies.

The traditionally predominant administrative style is the style referred to by Douglas McGregor (1960) as theory X. Theory X administrators are autocratic and bureaucratic. Transactional Analysis (TA) theory categories their ego states as "I'm OK, You're Not OK." These administrators act the role of parents and deal with their staffs as children. They desire their subordinates to be obedient, submissive, adaptive children and attempt to surround themselves with people who fit this mold. The following are examples of scripts often played out by these administrators (Villeré, 1981, pp. 198-244).

Don't Rock the Boat

These administrators typically encourage, either directly or by their actions, all subordinates to do exactly as they are told. At no time would they permit employees to deviate. Employees should not do anything to cause upheaval in the organization, and they are, thus, encouraged to be mediocre.

Penny Pinchers Unlimited

These administrators feel compelled to watch every purchase you make. They are certain that teachers do not have either the intelligence or wisdom to make appropriate monetary decisions. Their messages suggest that teachers should conserve, conserve, conserve. These administrators see themselves as protectors of the public coffers and revel in their ability to balance the budget.

Red Tape, Inc.

Employees are bombarded with rules under this administration. Rules abound to cover every conceivable circumstance. Teachers are required to be familiar with the rules and carry them out religiously. The underlying rule is, however, to be busy but not necessarily effective, to be accountable but not efficient, and to fill out forms without being innovative.

No Rules, Just Referees

The school which has few rules is often run under an elitist philosophy. Rules are what seem to serve the moment. Individuals' community involvement and local stature will quite likely determine their ability to influence the organization. After all, anything can be rationalized. Decisions and policies are based on political alignment. If you are in the group favored by the administration, you can do no wrong. If, however, you are in the group viewed as antagonistic, nothing that you can do will allow you to be seen as successful.

Uproar Unlimited

Jump! Jump! Jump! In uproar unlimited, being in motion is more important than knowing where you are going. Teachers are not expected to think; they are only required to do. Administrators are constantly making disquieting decisions aimed at keeping employees off balance. The school is in a constant state of commotion under no apparent guiding direction.

Cutthroat Enterprises

In cutthroat enterprises the school atmosphere is in a constant state of tension. Everyone feels in jeopardy. The prevailing administrative philosophy seems to be "nail the bastards when you can." Employees are often pitted against each other. They fear making decisions or suggesting innovative practices.

Prince of P.R.

In these schools the public relations impact of a decision determines how it will be made. Teachers who have newspaper articles published showing their classrooms operating efficiently have immediate power in the system. The administrator is constantly working on poster campaigns, sound slide presentations, and newsletters. Individual teacher's wishes are secondary to the public relations impact, as are such things as chalk, erasers, and audio-visual purchases. These administrators are often "all smiles" in front of the public and "all frowns" to their staff.

McGregor's theory Y is the antithesis of his theory X. Here administrators encourage participation in the decision-making process. They see teachers as competent, self-motivated, and responsible. The transactional analysis model describes this as an "I'm OK, You're OK" relationship. Theory Y administrators see themselves as adults relating to adults.

Teachers who work for these administrators can show initiative and are self-reliant. They have easy access to their administrators and feel that even though their wishes are not always granted, they are at least understood and considered. Theory Y administrators use their teachers' expertise. They are able to delegate responsibility and authority to their staff without feeling threatened. Teachers can grow and mature in this environment as they explore options and challenges on their own.

McGregor's theory Z meshes theory Y with theory X. This approach, sometimes called the contingency approach, suggests that you can be neither autocratic nor democratic all the time and operate at maximum effectiveness. Theory Z administrators mesh autocratic and democratic decision-making in varying degrees and in varying situations along a continuum. Their individual administrative styles dictate which technique they employ in any given situation. This decision, however, usually centers around such variables as time, political impact, and resident expertise. While administrators vary as to the degree to which they retain autonomy, each theory Z administrator believes that it is not wise to make all decisions without consultation. Theory Z administrators, then, act sometimes in the "I'm OK, You're OK," adult-to-adult mode and other times in the "I'm OK, You're Not OK," adult-to-child mode.

Villeré addresses two additional management styles. The first he refers to as "management by abdication." Administrators operating from this perspective are in a TA "I'm Not OK, You're OK" child-to-parent mode. Administrators stay "perched on the fence" when they operate in this style. The buck is passed on all levels and decisions, if made at all, are slowly conceived. Administrators often fail to back up their teachers in this mode. They blame

others for their shortcomings and talk about them behind their backs. Administrators in this category engender very little respect from their staffs.

Villeré describes one additional even more inefficient situation he calls "management by chaos." This would represent the TA child-to-child relationship characterized by the "I'm Not OK, You're Not OK" mind set. If something good happens in this system, it is by chance. Teachers do not understand their duties and responsibilities and do not care. Almost anything is tolerated at any level until it gets someone in trouble with the school board or the law.

If composition teachers are to exhibit the kind of control necessary to cause change in their system, they need to understand the administrative structure of the school; this structure may be an individual, such as the superintendent or a principal, or it may be a group such as the board of education. A little reflection concerning the manner in which important decisions have been made in your district in the past should be enough to allow you to isolate the power and begin to assess the style of administrative behavior exhibited.

Teachers working in a democratic (theory Y) or contingency (theory Z) setting should be able to effect change by convincing the administrator of the value, effectiveness, and (if possible) the efficiency of the proposed innovation. Traditional arguments citing research, opinions of noted scholars, and successful implementations in other schools should be effective.

Teachers working with administrators operating from the low self-esteem categories of "management by abdication" and "management by chaos" need to employ strategies that will convince the administrator that the proposed innovation will increase the administrator's creditability in the system. This must be done tactfully, but should be particularly successful.

Autocratic administrators will be more difficult. They begin with the assumption that they are right in all instances and you are wrong. It will be necessary to consider their particular style in outlining your strategy. The following list may give you some clues.

Script	Possible Strategies
Don't Rock the Boat	You must convince administration that the innovation will be kept in low profile and integrated into the system without problems.
Penny Pincher	You must show that the innovation is cost efficient and/or that you cannot afford not to make the implementation.
Red Tape, Inc.	The administration must be convinced that the new curriculum conforms to established rules or that the rules need to be changed. They must not see this as a threat to their authority.
No Rules, Just Referees	If you are in the correct political camp you should have no problem. If not, you may have to convince a colleague to make the presentation.
Uproar Unlimited	They probably won't even know you implemented a change.
Cutthroat Enterprises	Amass the support that you can from colleagues, convince the administration that you are on their side in this endeavor, and protect yourself by putting as much in writing as possible.

Prince of P.R.	Make a formal presentation complete with charts, time tables, and overhead transparencies. Have appropriate news releases about the innovation typed and hand them out at the conclusion of your presentation.

Once you have analyzed your administration's style and have determined the most appropriate method to convince them of the worthiness of your proposal, it is essential that you thoroughly organize your implementation plans so that you are prepared for all conceivable questions. Be able to answer each of the following in detail.

1.	Philosophy:	Is this innovation consistent with the prevailing philosophy of the department and school?
2.	Need:	Can I demonstrate a clear need for the innovation?
3.	Objectives:	What are the long-term (goals) and short-term (behavioral) objectives of the innovation?
4.	Activities:	When will the activities begin and end? Is there a sequence to the activities? What different will happen in the classroom? What different will be expected of students? What is the implementation timeline?
5.	Evaluation:	How will you know if it has been successful? Will each of the objectives be evaluated?
6.	Budget:	How much will it cost in time and dollars? Will the money be needed all at once?

By this time, then, you have considered the particular administrative style of the power wielder(s) in your system. This consideration has given you some ideas as to how you might successfully convince your administrator to allow you to try the change you wish to make. You are also completely certain of exactly what you want to do, who it will affect, how you are going to do it, how you are going to evaluate it, and what it will cost.

It is time to make your sales pitch. Consider the timing. Make an appointment which will allow you plenty of time to discuss the issues. Gather your forces and make the most organized, dramatic, and enthusiastic presentation you can make!

A Possible Scenario

Now the board president looks at me. I can see the perplexed look on his face. Is he trying to restrain his enthusiasm for my idea? He is about to speak. "John, this is very interesting and I do want our students to have a command of the language. In the law profession I have found the necessity of making each word work for me in its own special way. Amazingly enough, however, I have never had to resort to misspelled words and sentence fragments to have my meaning clearly understood. I would hasten to add that some of my colleagues have told me that at times my discourses are imaginative and creative. Could you give me an example of a . . . say sentence fragment that works more effectively than a sentence that I could, perhaps, generate to replace it?"

Peter Elbow (1973), where are you? I need some of your salesmanship. Oh, to be able to speak a hundred pages now on the single theme of freewriting! What shall I do? I must escape his trap.

"Certainly, Mr. Reed, I could not convince you of the importance of this idea with one example any more than you could convince me of the cohesive beauty of our law system by reviewing one case with me. The idea must stand on its own merit over the test of experience. Our students must be freed from their lockstep approach to writing. They must be able to experiment more freely with words and ideas on paper so that they can feel the power of words as they use

them in daring configurations."

"Be also assured, Mr. Reed, that we will not abandon the correctness that your profession demands. Editing and correct usage have a definite place in our schema. The difference is that now our students will have a reason to learn the grammar. They will need it to make their work understandable to the public they wish to influence."

How I would fear the thought of being questioned by this man in court. His eyes probe my brain and scald my affirmations. He is about to speak. "John, I'm still not convinced that a student cannot just as effectively present his case, so to speak, completely within the realm of our language's conventions. If your new writing approach means accepting inferior writing under the guise of creativity, I am against it. If it will increase our students' ability to use the language and have confidence in their writing, and if it will eventually lead to an increased desire to use correct grammar, I am for it. I just don't know."

It is time to compromise. "Mr. Reed, let's settle out of court and agree to review our progress in the spring. Allow me, if you will, to experiment with my class this year. We will free write with a minimum of constraints. We will talk about the development of ideas through writing. I will convince them that their writing has the magic and power to change their lives. I will send no writing home with a grade that does not meet the requirements of conventional prose. At the end of the year I will bring samples of student writing to the board. You may examine their initial writing skills and contrast them with their ending writing skills. Let's determine together if it makes sense for our school."

Henry County Schools
Napoleon

Teaching the "Unteachables"

Linda Eddy

When I began teaching junior high English eleven years ago, I expected to greet younger versions of myself: students able to read, eager to learn, headed for college, and determined to stay in school. I pleasantly anticipated teaching grammar, literature, and composition to young people waiting to be challenged. And I was not disappointed. My transition from college student to teacher was a smooth one.

Then, in 1976, my teaching assignment changed to ninth-grade "bonehead" English. Opening day that year two of my freshman classes greeted me not with hands raised to respond eagerly to my questions, but with arms crossed resolutely on each desk, eyes narrowed--hostile and resistant.

No question about it. I was frightened. Both by those resistant, hostile faces staring at me, and by my obvious predicament: I simply didn't know how to cope with, let alone teach, students so openly opposed to being in the classroom. Neither did the school counselor who advised me to do whatever I chose with "them."

Obviously the administration saw them as "faceless cases . . . under-achievers" (Gordon, 1974, p. 14). I knew I would have to be patient, supportive, and reassuring if I were ever to teach these "unteachables" to write. So the first thing I did was to assure my thirty novice writers that what they wrote each day for five minutes would be held confidential and that they would not be punished for mechanical errors. I urged them to express themselves freely--to record a recent happening in their lives or to share a particular concern.

Of course, they were reluctant at first. In their previous school situations these students had not been encouraged to express their ideas and feelings. And words didn't come easily for them. But my writing along with them helped to convince them that writing was not as bad as they had thought. Gradually they began to respond. When I was patient, supportive, and reassuring, their fluency increased. To my surprise, they even asked me to extend their writing time. They were beginning to enjoy writing.

Their journals soon began to fill in some of the pieces of background missing from the files in the guidance counselor's office. Some of these adolescent writers went home each day to alcoholic parents who relied on television sets to "babysit." Others faced unloving parents who were burdened with financial or psychological problems, or stigmatized by criminal records. Still others, themselves in trouble with the law, wanted to get away from home.

One 15-year-old drug user who had spent one year in the Ohio Youth Commission for assault and breaking and entering wrote:

> My parents just don't seem to listen to me when I try to explain they just keep on bugging me and yelling and then when I get tired of it I just tell them to forget it and they take that hard but they don't say anything to me.

Later he added:

> I am fed up with mom and dad yelling and fighting every morning. I can't take it anymore. I want to run away or get rid of them.

The next day Frank Smith stole a car and left for Texas but was stopped short of his destination. Sent to the Open Door Home, he remained in school and wrote of his new home:

> This is better than home. Everyone is nice. The food is good. I even get to cook. I don't want to leave.

This was not an isolated case. The more these students wrote, the more their writing confidence increased, as well as their quality of expression. Even the slowest "unteachable" had within himself a reservoir of writing potential just waiting to be released.

I've found that movies and television help me tap that reservoir. Since movies and television are a major source of images and impressions in our students' lives, I take my "unteachables" at least once a year to a major movie. After the film, we go together to the ice cream parlor and discuss the movie. The next morning when the students enter the classroom, I have the theme song from the movie playing and the initial writing activity of the day written on the board:

> For the first five minutes of class, I want each of you to think about the movie. Write down your impressions and feelings--whatever comes to mind--about the movie as you listen to the music. Write these feelings in any form you choose.

Then all of us write. At the conclusion of the music, we share our writing. I don't force anyone to read his or her writing. But most will want to share once I read mine.

This writing activity leads us into poetry. We begin with a Five-Step Poem, written about one of the characters from the movie, usually the main character. First we compose a collaborative poem that I write on the board as the "unteachables" select and dictate the words in this order:

1. Write down a noun--a person, place, or thing.
2. On the line below, write two adjectives describing the noun. Separate the two by a comma.
3. On the third line, write three verbs that tell what the noun does. Separate each by commas.
4. On the fourth line, write a short phrase about the noun.
5. For the fifth and last line, write a synonym or some word related to the noun.

(Cutler et al., Now Poetry, 1975, p. 4).

Here's what students wrote after seeing Rocky at our "Night at the Movies":

Rocky Balboa
Hard-headed, tough
Runs, trains, fights
Goes the distance against Creed
Italian Stallion

by Kevin Lowther

Next I have each student write a Five-Step Poem about a character from the movie this way:

Line 1--Tell who you're writing about.
Line 2--Describe the character with adjectives connected by and or but.
Line 3--Use a verb and an adverb to show the character in a typical action. Begin the line with As.
Line 4--Think up a comparison to show a special quality this character has.

Line 5--Close the poem with an If only phrase which expresses something you wish for regarding this character.

Student example:

Rocky Balboa
Determined and strong
Fights courageously
As tough as steel
If only I could be like him.

Steve Hupp

Then we expand the Five-Step into a People Poem. The "unteachables" like to write People Poems about the other characters from the movie, and some even choose to illustrate their poems. Often the next writing activity is an ode, a poem of praise for the student's favorite character of the movie. Usually I will read an example of an ode before we begin this free verse poem either collectively or individually. Both approaches have been quite successful.

The above activities can be adapted to any movie or television show or book. I have had success with the Rocky movies, with some after-school specials, such as Stoned, and with the S. E. Hinton books: The Outsiders, That Was Then, This Is Now, Rumble Fish, and Tex.

But Rocky has been especially effective because the "unteachables" identify with Sylvester Stallone's struggle to be successful--both as a writer and as a boxer. He has met familiar obstacles:

1. He failed all of his high school English classes.
2. He was considered a "beefy bozo," "a lunk," a "lamebrain."
3. He was often expelled from school.
4. He had a violent temper that got him into trouble often.

And, through Stallone's comment, "If I'm so dumb, why am I so rich?" these young people "see" that there's a chance they, too, can be successful--that they can "go the distance" if they are determined to do so. Rocky gives them hope--something they desperately need.

Other poetic forms that "unteachables" enjoy are limericks, clerihews, haikus, haiku-estions, repeat-a-word poems, and poems that imitate the pattern of an already existent poem, such as "This Is Just to Say" by William Carlos Williams. Kenneth Koch (1973) says that imitative writing gives students confidence, "stir[s] up their feelings of emulation, [helps] them get ideas" (p. 28).

Using the style of "This Is Just to Say," one "unteachable" wrote:

This is just to say
I have heard
the poem you wrote

And which you
were probably high
or stoned when you wrote it

Forgive me
but I find it
so dumb and so stupid.

-Sharon Briton-

Later, encouraged by their success of simple creative forms, the "unteachables" can be lured into enjoying and writing more complex poetic

types, such as the shrinklit. A shrinklit is a fast-moving poem about a work of literature, television show, or movie. The student "shrinks" the content of a short story, book, or movie into a free-verse poem in whatever style the writer desires (Sagoff, 1980).

This shrinklit based on S. E. Hinton's book That Was Then, This Is Now was written by the boy who spent one year at the Ohio Youth Commission:

That Was Then, This Is Now

It was late in August and Bryon visited Mark
The reformatory was cold, lonely, and dark.
Bryon felt uneasy and didn't know what to say
He only wished Mark's hatred toward him would go away
"We were like brothers. You were my best friend."
Bryon said trying to make the friendship mend
Mark laughed because all his hope had died
"That was then, this is now," Mark coldly replied.

To culminate our year-long "voyage of discovery," each individual "unteachable" publishes a 16 to 20 page chapbook filled with selected pieces of his or her writing. Each is given instruction and assistance in the rewriting and binding of his or her book. Great pride and a sense of accomplishment pervade the classroom at this crucial publishing stage. The students cannot wait to share their books with friends, teachers, and families.

Once I realized that a congenial atmosphere and acceptance were necessary in the development of the "unteachable" student's writing, my task as English teacher was easier. By providing assignments in writing that generated spontaneous expression of ideas and feelings for students to whom language skills did not come easily, but for whom laughter and tears were quite real, I feel that I helped develop positive attitudes toward writing and toward school in my now "teachables."

Marietta Junior High School
Marietta City Schools
Marietta

Rise Above the Ordinary: Sensory Techniques in Writing Assignments

Barbara Y. Cablish

As both an art and English teacher, I am aware that young children learn through all of their senses and that primary and elementary classrooms should always be alive with color and activity. Teachers bring "feelies," "smellies," and "tasties" to class to stimulate these young energetic learners; thus the students take an active part in the learning process. On the other hand, high school hallways and classrooms are sometimes colorless and lifeless. Decorations are "kid stuff"--not fit for young adults. The high school students, too often, are placed in uninteresting, uninviting surroundings and expected to be creative. Who said that high school students don't need "feelies" and "smellies"? Oh, I don't give these activities such childish names--they are not child's play; they are important developmental stages in the writing process. Writing process? Yes. The students need to have opportunities to hear, see, smell, taste, and touch things and express their reactions in writing. It is my job as a teacher to help my students to be receptive to the messages from their senses which are direct, immediate, and personal, and to be able to communicate these perceptions.

One of the first priorities in getting students to write down their thoughts and feelings is giving them an activity that is in front of them--an immediate stimulus. Irmscher (1979) says that such prewriting activities should be used to "help the students loosen up and overcome the psychological barriers to writing" and that "the prewriting period ought to be a time of exploration--observing and recording perceptions" (p. 78). Then these activities that stimulate the senses, these activities that my students and I enjoy, haven't been merely fun and games; they have been times of exploration--a time to observe and record sensory messages.

What activities? More than a bag full of tricks, I have a curriculum designed to create sensory awareness. My ideas might sound gimmicky at first, but only through such "gimmicks" can my students overcome their apprehension of writing and communicate their thoughts and perceptions effectively.

Sense of Sight

Sadly, students have learned to filter out so much visual stimuli that they develop a habit of looking without seeing. Part of a relearning process that Irmscher, among others, stresses includes relearning the skill of observation. It is a skill that must be learned, worked on, and practiced. Visual techniques to stimulate writing are perhaps the most widely used sensory activities. Students usually have good feelings about media outside the school (TV, video games, and movies), and these good feelings carry over into the classroom. A visual displayed before the entire class can inspire writing and discussion by the group. Then, because the students have shared a common experience, they can relate to each other's responses.

One activity that helps the students to be more adept at observation is to flash a picture or illustration on a screen for a short length of time. My objective is to make the students look closely and make mental notes. With the projector off, the students then list what they saw. The first time they do this activity they are often surprised by what they missed. I project the illustration again and discuss what they missed and why. This is an activity that can be repeated often with many variations. When I begin, I use a single, simple line drawing and gradually add more detailed pictures as the students become more skilled in their observations. One variation on the same activity is to use specific questions about the pictures rather than having the students list everything they see. It is also interesting to focus their attention on a specific aspect of the picture, and discuss how this focusing might change what they observe.

In observation exercises, it is not always necessary to produce a visual; they exist all around the classroom. For instance, how many times do you see students looking out the classroom window? Well, here is a chance to get the students out of their seats and allow them to look out the window. In my classroom, I have a large window area. I tell the students to go to the window and look outside. In about two minutes I ask them to return to their seats and again list as many things as they can remember without looking outside again. (If the students tend to look, I close the black-out drapes.) After their lists are completed, the students discuss the similarities and differences in the lists. We then discuss possible reasons for the differences which occurred while they were viewing the same scene.

The discussion is as much a prewriting activity as the lists that the students write. "Its purpose is to overcome the passivity of students and get them to act and interact" (Irmscher, p. 85).

After the students have practiced observing activities, I like to put their power of observation to the test. I stage a "scene" in the classroom. This "scene" can involve students from another classroom or a study hall. I have had two students walk into the class as if they were looking for a book. When one found the book, the other student tried to take it away from him and a scuffle ensued. I, of course, stopped the fight and marched the boys out the door and supposedly to the office. When I returned to the class, the students were discussing the incident. I asked the students to write a detailed report of the fight. What happened? When did it happen? Who was involved? What were they wearing? The students then shared their accounts in small groups. The groups listed the details that they included and presented any discrepancies that were reported. We compared these observations of this mock scene to police and accident reports in which inconsistencies in observation often occur.

These activities actively involve the students in observation and writing. The lists of observations generated by such activities are not an end in themselves. They can be kept as part of a journal or file on writing ideas and called upon whenever the students wish to develop these observations into compositions.

Sense of Hearing

Since we rely heavily upon our sense of sight to perceive the world, we do not fully develop our listening skills. The obvious way to enhance the ability to hear is to suppress visual stimuli by closing the eyes or using a blindfold. These next exercises allow the students to record, identify, or respond to auditory stimuli.

Much like the visual exercises, hearing activities help develop writing fluency. The students record or respond to sounds in brief phrases or impressions. One very simple, but effective exercise is to have the students close their eyes and listen very carefully. They begin to hear sounds in the room--fluorescent lights buzzing, radiators hissing, pencils tapping, change jingling--that were there yet undiscernible. The students have now become energetic listeners who must employ every ounce of their concentration if they are to hear everything that is going on. If they are involved in listening, they are thinking and feeling, both necessary in writing.

Music or sound effect records provide good imaginative stimuli for free association of ideas. When using music to stimulate writing, it is better to select material without lyrics so students can associate the music with tastes, smells, textures, or sights.

An interesting activity that my students respond well to is a free-writing exercise associated with a sound effect album of a thunderstorm. I close the black-out draperies and turn off the lights. While listening to

the album for about fifteen minutes, the students' eyes begin to adjust to the darkness, and they are able to begin to respond to the sounds. If the students are reluctant to begin writing, I place starters on the board before I begin the recording such as "I remember," "What I like," "What I hate." The students can usually relate some incident in their lives that was influenced by a rainstorm or simply write down their feelings--usually fears--relating to the storm.

Sense of Smell

Many claim that the sense of smell--more than any sense--is likely to evoke long-ago memories. I can remember as a child that my grandmother used to use mothballs as air fresheners. Even today when I catch a whiff of the mothball odor, my memory immediately sweeps me back to Grandma's huge two-story house. When offering odors in the classroom, I try to bring substances (smellies) that might jar the students' memories and allow them to associate something in their lives to this olfactory stimulus.

Small opaque containers that close tightly can be used to conceal substances until the sensory activity is ready to begin (small black plastic jars which hold film serve well). I place items with mild fragrances such as herbs or flowers, as well as things with pungent odors such as garlic or Ben-Gay in these small closed containers. The students can hold the jar close to their noses and pop the cap to receive the full impact of the scent. In this activity, the goal is not simply to say, "Oh, this is garlic," but to relate to the smell. What does it remind them of? What can they remember about the first time they smelled it? How does the smell make them feel? What color would this odor be?

Another in-class activity that jogs the students' memories is to make lists of smells that they associate with school. The students can think about odors from the cafeteria, gymnasium, hallways, or chemistry class. Not only can they remember odors in the building, but they can list perfumes or colognes associated with students or teachers. These lists can produce very vivid images that can be developed into poetry or narratives about school life.

Outside the school there are stores and businesses which have their own characteristic odors. The students can visit beauty shops, garages, bakeries, butcher shops, etc., and list predominate smells. This smelling and writing is again a fluency exercise, but the experience helps to make the students aware of olfactory imagery, and its importance in writing. The more that students write about odors, the more they realize they must rely on comparisons and associations because the sense vocabulary for smells is not as developed as that of seeing and hearing.

Sense of Taste

I was surprised to learn (or relearn) that humans perceive only four tastes--sour, sweet, salt, and bitter. Any other nuances of taste stem from the smell and the feeling of the food inside the mouth. To illustrate this point, imagine eating dinner while suffering from a cold. The food has little, if any flavor.

With this knowledge it is difficult to develop activities which isolate the sense of taste. In the next activities the sense of taste will also rely on the students' senses of sight and smell.

Simple eating activities which involve giving the students a piece of gum or candy can get them started into writing about tastes. That sudden burst of flavor upon their tongues can be described or related to a personal situation.

The "surprise cookie" is a sneaky, but enjoyable tasting and writing activity. I bring a cookie jar full of cookies that I bake especially to share with my class. The sneaky part is that I substitute salt for sugar or add some unusual ingredient such as oregano or garlic. Before I give the students a surprise cookie, I ask them to freewrite about the word "cookie." Thus, when I give the students the cookies they respond by gagging, but remember to write their comments. I have them write not only what they taste, but also what they felt like when they bit into the cookie. I usually try to have them identify the surprise ingredient, too. P.S.--Don't forget to bring "real" cookies for them to eat--so they will trust you this time.

This activity makes the students aware of their sense of taste and also brings out attitudes toward food. I always hear moans when I mention the Dr. Seuss story of "Green Eggs and Ham." We discuss how color, and pre-conceived ideas about food influence our sense of taste. As we discuss food, we again realize that our vocabulary is limited, and we find ourselves making comparisons or relying on visual descriptions of the food. The sense of taste shows the interrelationship of all the senses in the communication of vivid images.

Sense of Touch

Most of our lives we have been told, "Don't touch," so we have trained ourselves to refrain from the natural urge to touch and feel. I find that students enjoy picking up objects--touching and examining them closely; therefore, I provide them with the opportunity.

I display different types of fabrics on a table, velvet, satin, corduroy, burlap, cotton, among others. I have the students feel the different materials with their hands or face, and make written comments about the texture. In addition to recording impressions, I have the students imagine something made from that fabric.

Also in the tactile realm of activities, I bring samples of Braille to class. I have the students close their eyes and run their fingers along the bumps. Discussions after this activity usually center around the idea that our remaining senses become more acute when we lose any of our senses.

The grab bag activities usually associated with elementary classes are adaptable for older students too. I have to search for unusual objects which have interesting tactile qualities and which the students will not readily identify. They reach into a cloth bag and describe the size, shape, surface quality, and indentations or projections. They often make comparisons to known objects to create a clear description.

The students should have the chance to develop their sense of touch. Most of their lives they have been told to "look," "watch," or "see," but seldom are they told to feel in any situation.

The Five Senses

The senses do not exist in isolation, and neither do these prewriting activities. They each work toward the development of the students' potential to write vividly and imaginatively about the world around them.

At last it is time to incorporate all the senses into a single activity. The most difficult task is to find a simple object that is visible, touchable, edible, smellable, and audible all at the same time. For me, an apple fits the bill and is easily managed in a classroom setting. In small groups the students first examine the apple carefully and write down a detailed description of the size, color, and general appearance of the apple. Each student

then holds the apple and describes it in relation to texture, weight, and firmness. Before the apple is cut, the students write down any thoughts, feelings, or expectations about the apple. The senses of taste, smell, and sound all come into play now. The apple is cut and divided among the group. In a free association style the students jot down impressions as they occur; catching each image while it is fresh. The students can then eat the apple and satisfy each of their senses.

Their ideas are before them, the taste is still on their tongues, and now is the time to write. When the smelling, touching, tasting, looking, and eating are completed I have the students develop the phrases and ideas on their paper into a sensory poem, concrete poem, or descriptive paragraph.

Near the end of the school year I like to use a writing activity that brings together the classroom and the world beyond those walls. The first part of the activity calls for sensory observations. The students select a place to observe, such as the shopping center, gymnasium, ball park, or police station. They utilize all their senses in this investigation and make notes during the experience. In class the next day the students discuss their experiences in small groups. The next step in the assignment is to develop their sensory images into a poem. Finally they find a picture to illustrate some aspect of their poem.

At last they have it--all of their senses combined in their writing. They have a handle on that wealth of words and images that dwell within them. They now have a way of exploring not only the world around them, but also the creative expression within.

Glenwood High School
New Boston Local Schools
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Writing to Learn Across the Curriculum

Fred Doss

I would like to address two questions in considering the idea of writing across the curriculum: (1) Why is so little writing being used in the content areas? and (2) How can teachers be convinced of the need to employ more writing in their classroom instruction? If my experiences as both student and teacher are any indication, writing is regarded as the sanctuary of the English teacher. Some teachers who feel this way are simply unwilling to take the time to check written work; others are uncertain about how to evaluate written work.

Probably the best way to convince teachers in the content areas that writing is important is to show them that students learn as they write--not by rote memorization but by discovering interconnections, gaining new insights (see Beyer, 1980, pp. 169-70).

A teacher can use a variety of writing activities to create learning situations in the content areas. One activity, freewriting, places emphasis on getting ideas down on paper, without too much concern for grammar, spelling, or organization. Peter Elbow (1973) believes this activity allows writers who have difficulty putting words on paper to free themselves from the restraints of formal writing structure, avoid hours of nonproductive work, and the frustration of not being able to get started writing on a particular topic. I find freewriting enjoyable myself, and I can actually see changes in my own writing because of it. Ideas that I had not thought about before I put pen to paper begin to appear as I freewrite.

The best way to start freewriting is with short periods of three to five minutes. Gradually increase the periods as the students become accustomed to the exercises. You can have students write about what they feel is important in an assignment; they can freewrite before a discussion, or after--summarizing and and drawing conclusions. You might have them exchange papers or read aloud to the whole class (see Marcus, 1980, for more suggestions).

Since freewriting virtually eliminates editing while writing, it improves fluency, allows students to examine information in the content areas from their own perspective, and provides learning that is relevant and meaningful for the students. It can also serve as a prewriting activity that can lead up to the development of a more polished piece of writing.

Students can record their freewriting in the form of a journal (Fulwiler, 1980). Whether in a spiral bound or looseleaf notebook, journals offer students an opportunity to experiment with writing style, form, and organization. Teachers should set an example by writing along with the students and sharing their own writing with them. This might help the students and the teacher to realize how difficult it is to write about certain topics.

Other ways to incorporate writing into all subjects range from monologues to letters to dialogues. An activity that I have used in both social studies and reading classes is writing plays. The children really enjoy this because it allows them to role play a specific character. With the choice of topic usually left up to them, students especially like writing their lines and working together in small groups. They can also perform for their classmates and sometimes for students in other rooms.

While an undergraduate, I heard a teacher tell a student that he taught history, not writing. This remark was made in answer to a question about punctuation and spelling in an assignment written on the board for the students to copy. I now understand how mistaken that teacher was. Writing is much more than grammar and too essential to be left out of any learning process.

Valley Intermediate
Valley Local Schools
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Hemispheric Specialization and Teaching Writing

Penny Passavant

"I hear you're doing your presentation on 'right-brained, left-brained.' I'm really interested in that. I can't wait to hear what you have to say."

"I heard a guy speak on that last year. I'm definitely right-brained. My wife's a leftie. They say that you're likely to be married to an opposite."

"Just what does it mean anyway? I'm left-handed. Does that mean my hemispheres are all mixed up?"

"Right-brained, left-brained . . . Is there any such thing as 'no-brained'?"

These comments and questions are typical of those preceding my presentation at the Ohio Writing Project this past year. The topic of hemisphere dominance and specialization is just beginning to filter down to the classroom teacher through scholarly journals and education magazines. I suspect that teachers have a two-fold reason for learning more about it: for the implications it might have on their classroom instructional practices, and for what it could tell them about themselves as teachers and as human beings.

In a way, this topic provokes an excitement and interest not unlike that associated with the fortune teller and card reader. However, there is considerably more empirical evidence for the hemispheric specialization construct than for the soothsayer's predictions.

For instance, work with epileptics who have had their corpus callosum severed in order to control their seizures has made possible the identification of information-processing activities unique to each hemisphere. The data suggest that the left hemisphere is specialized for abstract, analytical, logical, sequential, and verbal operations, while the right hemisphere specializes in aesthetic, analogic, concrete, holistic, spatial, and intuitive functions. What this says to us as educators is that the left hemisphere influences the basic skills for school achievement: reading, writing, computation, and speaking; the right hemisphere influences skills related to the "arts," such as the production of music, painting, and sculpture (McCallum and Glynn, 1979, pp. 264-265).

What does this say to us as teachers of writing? How can we draw on the strengths of both hemispheres in the creation of a written product? What teaching practices serve to involve and motivate the student in the writing process? How will the increasing knowledge of hemispheric functioning affect English teacher training and practice? It is these questions that I examine in this paper.

Nancy and Martin Kane (1979, pp. 164-165) have compiled a list of activities to stimulate the right hemisphere. Those that directly apply to creative writing include visual images, inferring from feelings, concrete experiences, visual associations, acting out stories, imagining, dreaming and fantasizing, dealing with the whole concept, and visual approaches.

Notice the emphasis on visualizing in stimulating the right hemisphere into action. There are numerous ways writing teachers could use visualizing. On the primary level, "Show and Tell" is a perfect example of a prewriting activity that stimulates not only the right hemisphere but requires the left's skill of verbalization. Sinatra suggests elementary teachers use pictures to enhance discussions of plot, characterization, and setting (1979, pp. 7-9). In upper grades, teachers can arrange visual compositions to help students achieve an understanding of organizational patterns in writing. Slides lend themselves to this very well.

Rico (1980) suggests visualizing activities designed to engage various functions of the right hemisphere in prewriting exercises, many of which develop naturally into activities requiring left hemisphere skills.

A technique that utilizes the right hemisphere mode of spatial perception is to have students literally frame the space they will use for writing. Draw or cut out geometric shapes and have the assignment written on the unlined paper. This is effective with children with severe writing problems. It is then an easy step to comic strip dialogue written in balloons and then on to the use of quotation marks. Use of color (paper, pens, crayons, felt markers, etc.) in conjunction with this activity is stimulating to the right hemisphere, also.

Guided imagery prewriting exercises will help students focus on details. In effect, it asks students to close their eyes and imagine a scene before they write about it. It can also be used to require the use of the right mode in consideration of the whole concept while constructing the parts of the whole. Such exercises often lead to writing possessing strong visual imagery.

A possible follow-up to this would be to have each student design a complete book jacket for their books, after examining book jackets from the school library. This assignment would make use of the right hemisphere functions of color, design, and shape, as well as the left's functions of summarizing and writing critically.

Titling asks that students use a working title and then reconsider that title after they have written on it. It is an activity designed to integrate the hemispheres by requiring the writer to hold the whole piece in mind (right hemisphere concept of Gestalt/schema) as the parts are constructed (left hemisphere). In addition, it is useful to have students leave these writings untitled and see if their peers are able to title them. If this cannot be done easily, then perhaps the writing lacks focus.

Concrete poetry is an example of an activity that requires the shaping of words into a representation of the poem's subject matter. In so doing, it combines the right hemisphere functions of space and the whole and the left hemisphere skills of arranging parts within a whole.

For more advanced students, teachers could encourage students to write the first draft and suspend any criticism of the work while doing it. This allows the holistic perception of the right hemisphere to emerge. When the first draft is completed, the "critic" function of the left hemisphere may begin to edit, rearrange, and rework.

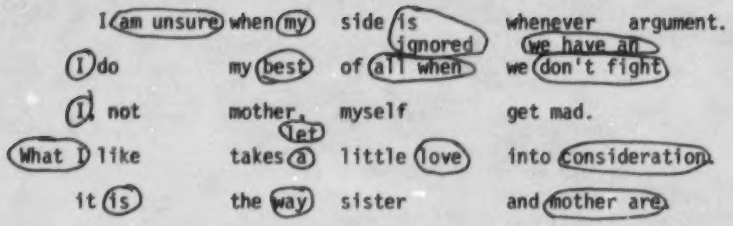
Clustering is an effective method of brainstorming by visually centering a key word or phrase, circling it, running out several "spokes" of related words or ideas from it, and other "sub-spokes" from those to provide a spatial arrangement and an open-ended structure (right hemisphere attributes).

Clustering is useful as a pre- and post-assessment of a student's knowledge about something under study. It allows both the student and teacher to see just what is known and how much more study and discussion might be needed.

Samples suggest an activity designed to bring out the intuitive meanings of children's writings. Students write one long sentence or several short ones that deal with something they feel strongly about and then put the sentence or sentences into four or five vertical columns. Using the fewest possible words, the student is to make each new column into sentences that support or expand the original emotions.

The example below grew from the original sentence "I do not like it when my mother takes the side of my little sister whenever we get into an argument." It is written in five vertical columns. The circled words are those filled in by the student to expand on the original. Notice how the intuitive

meanings emerge.


I am unsure when my side is ignored whenever argument.
I do my best of all when we we have an don't fight
I not mother, let myself get mad.
What I like takes a little love into consideration.
it is the way sister and mother are.

Another method of tapping the creative capacities of the right hemisphere is to encourage the use of a dream journal. The students keep writing materials by their beds and, after awaking from a dream, eyes closed, recall the main elements of the dream, jot down only those elements, and return to sleep. The next day they examine and elaborate upon the notes using prose or poetry, paying particular attention to sensory input.

Other writing activities that pull from the right side of the brain include writing in others' voices and viewpoints, writing to music (that without lyrics and somewhat unfamiliar melodies prove more successful), writing after concrete experiences involving all the senses, and creation of "bestiaries" (descriptions and illustrations of imaginary animals).

The implications of right-left brain research for education are numerous and not very well understood at this point. Eventually, we may see changes in our teacher training programs as a result of new understanding about the brain's role in information-processing. Emig (1978) indicates that English educators will probably need to learn far more about biology and physiology than has previously been required.

Washington Elementary School
Marietta City Schools
Marietta

Peer Editing with Guidelines

Eleanor Goldsmith

Ask yourself this question: As a student, when am I the most attentive in class? When I am speaking? When my classmates are speaking? When the teacher is speaking? If you are honest, you will probably admit that when you are talking, you are most attentive, and when the teacher is talking you are probably least attentive. When your classmates speak, you probably listen. My supervisor asked me that question when I was in the internship program at the University of Pittsburgh, and its implications have stayed with me for seventeen years. Since then, I have come to agree with Irvin Peckham, who believes he became a more effective teacher when he came to realize that students value their peers' opinions more than a teacher's (1978, p. 62). I saw the importance of peer opinions in my sixth grade classroom when I used group work extensively in social studies and science. Then, when I began to teach one discipline, seventh grade English, I found it more challenging to devise ways to use groups.

Without realizing it, I was usirg peer group editing after writing assignments. I knew students loved to hear their classmates' writing and so I put them in groups of four or five and had them read aloud to each other. Then I had them select the one paper they felt was the best and read it to the class. The class would discuss the merits of the papers. This was peer editing on a limited basis--students were listening to work, discussing it, and writers were getting feedback from a source other than the teacher.

A few years ago, after a class in sentence-combining where we tried one kind of peer editing, I tested it out in my classes. Students had at least two student editors. The editors could not correct on the writer's paper. Instead, they attached a sheet on which they wrote a favorable comment, offered suggestions for improvement, corrected mistakes by alluding to the line on which they were found, and returned the paper to the writer. While I liked the method, the seventh-grade comments were often too general and therefore not constructive. My students enjoyed reading the papers, but, as editors, they did not do a competent job.

Last November, at the NCTE Convention in Boston, I participated in a day-long workshop, taught by Dan Kirby from the University of Georgia, on peer editing with structured guidelines. In this structured activity, the students grade the papers on the following features on a scale from 1 to 5:

Specific Details
Vivid Verbs
Honest Writing
Overall Impression
Mechanics

Then they write a favorable comment and any suggestions for improvement. Each paper has two editors, and the editors' grades become a portion of the teacher's grade. I like this system the best of the three I have tried.

In reading some of the literature on this subject, I have come across other evaluative methods, but, so far, this one appeals to me.

When I began peer editing, I knew students would need instruction--in order to understand each section of the judging scale. I urged them on by telling them they would become real editors, not pretend ones. I began with

what is probably the most important and the most difficult guideline to teach--how to be specific.

*I have learned from experience not to assume anything about what seventh-*graders do or do not understand. The very words "general" and "specific" are where I begin. In showing students how to choose a general idea, I use the following exercise from Scott Foresman. The students check the general idea and distinguish it from specific details.

When Gerald is introduced to someone new, he blushes and stammers.
Gerald told me he would much rather write ten themes than give one talk.
Gerald is shy.
Gerald asked to be allowed to work the curtains, rather than take a part in the class play.

German shepherds are good at guiding blind people.
If necessary, a collie, all by itself, can take charge of herding a flock of sheep.
Dogs can do some very important jobs.
Bloodhounds recently helped to find a child who was lost in the woods.
Our mongrel alerted the whole neighborhood one night when there was a prowler around.
(Blough, 1968, p. 4).

They get further practice by learning what general idea specific details generate. In another Scott Foresman exercise they pick the general idea that best fits a set of details.

(a) One of my dogs, Punky, always comes when he is called.
(b) Punky never bothers Tabby, our neighbor's cat.
(c) Punky has never snarled at me, not even the time that I had to take a bone out of his mouth.
(d) My other dog, Sam, runs away when I call him.
(e) Sam chases Tabby up a tree at least three times a week.
(f) If I try to pet or hold Sam when he's not in the mood, he snarls. Then, if I don't stop right away, he nips me!
(X) Dogs are funny creatures.
(Y) My two dogs are different as night and day.
(Z) Having two dogs makes life exciting.

(a) Coralie told the history teacher the names of several pupils who had been talking while the teacher was out of the room.
(b) Coralie told her parents that her brother had been in a fist-fight during recess one afternoon.
(c) Coralie told Jim Duncan's mother about Jim's being rude to a woman in the next block.
(X) Coralie has a bad temper.
(Y) Coralie is a tattletale.
(Z) Coralie is observant.
(Blough, p. 5).

Rewriting sentences to be more specific is another way to encourage specificity. Give students practice by underlining general words in sentences and having them rewrite the sentences, making the general words as specific as possible. Some sample sentences might be:

1. That man is a good worker.
2. I like to go to that restaurant because it serves good food.
3. That animal can be dangerous.
4. They sold that dwelling for $50,000.
5. Bill is good at sports.
6. Sometimes I hate to go to school.

7. We visited many countries.
8. The sky was beautiful.

One of the most effective ways to produce showing, not telling, writing is to give groups of students a general paragraph to rewrite. Here is a sample:

> My dog Sebastian could win a medal if they gave one to a pet who causes the most trouble. He has done so many things that have made the family laugh. You can never tell what he'll think of next. Don't you understand now why I think he deserves a medal for causing trouble?

Keep the first and last sentences, but have each member in the group of four or five contribute one specific thing Sebastian did to prove he is a trouble-maker. By having the groups rate one another's writing they learn to judge specific details while growing used to reacting to each other's work. The situation is nonthreatening since the group, not one individual, is responsible for the rewriting.

Teaching students to recognize a good, specific detail is a rewarding experience. They grasp the concept readily and, with practice, even the less able students improve their skills. They take pride in reading their papers in the peer editing groups.

How do you teach young writers to use the best verb in a sentence? This is the next step in the teaching plan. My particular group of students has not had much formal grammar training so it would be useless to talk about active voice, passive voice, or linking verbs. I tell them to look over their writing and circle the verbs is, are, was, were, be, or been and decide if they can substitute a better, stronger verb. I tell them that these verbs serve a very useful purpose in making statements so that they may not want to change them. I do urge them to use the right verb, the most vivid verb, the verb that best carries the meaning. To illustrate this, I use many exercises like the one from Scott Foresman that follows:

> Which verb--gasped, said, lisped, snapped, whined--would be the best to use to give a specific idea of the way each of the following people spoke?
> (a) a six-year-old with three front teeth missing
> (b) a man who had just run three blocks to catch a bus
> (c) a tired child who was complaining about having to take a nap
> (d) a very irritable person answering what he thought was a silly question
>
> Which verb--trudged, stalked, strolled, tiptoed, walked--would be the best to use to give a specific idea of the way each of the following moved?
> (a) two boys trying to get past an open door without being heard or seen
> (b) a man leaving a room--slowly, stiffly, haughtily--because he thought he had been insulted
> (c) a woman who was killing time by window-shopping
> (d) a tired waitress, carrying a heavy tray to the kitchen
>
> Which verb--ate, gulped, nibbled, picked at, gobbled--would be the best to use to give a specific idea of the way each of the following people ate?
> (a) a man who was tipping oysters into his mouth and swallowing them
> (b) a woman who took quick, tiny bites of cookie
> (c) a greedy boy who stuffed down a plate of food as fast as he could; then immediately refilled his plate and started over
> (d) a girl who just poked at the food on her plate and took only a few bites

Which verb--glared, looked, peered, scanned, stared--would be the best to use to give a specific idea of the way each of the following people viewed someone or something?

(a) two boys who couldn't seem to take their eyes off a man dressed in an unusual outfit
(b) a man who ran his eye hurriedly over the front page of a newspaper
(c) a bad-tempered old lady who was annoyed at a group of noisy children
(d) a nearsighted girl who was trying to read the route sign on an approaching bus

Because no matter how specific a piece of writing, it must be honest writing to be felt, I work quite a bit with student voice. The overall impression a piece of writing makes cannot be defiend in concrete terms. It is a feeling. One way I present the concept of honest writing and overall impression is by reading to my students. I discuss the writing with them, and I--above all--use the writing of former seventh graders. I think hearing good writing from their peers encourages them. They begin to write more honestly, more effectively. Here are a few samples that I read to them to show them that others their age have written well:

Down in our back yard, at the end of the hill, is a large tree. From it hangs the rope, about twenty feet long. You hold tightly to two small knots and run. The rope lifts you to the bright blue sky, wind rushing through your hair like a dam which has suddenly been released. The trees, which scrape the sky, are run together like a picture which has been taken while someone is in motion. The ground spins dizzily and everything is a blur of trees, sky, and marshmallow clouds. But you are descending

down

down

down

to the ground where the spell of the rope is shattered like glass.

Gay

Brad

He rode his red tricycle up the sidewalk, peddling quickly. His red and white checkered cowboy shirt blew behind him as he zoomed nearer. White fringe on his black pants caught in the spokes of the back right wheel and he stopped just long enough to rip 'em out. A few fringes remained on the ground as he started to peddle again.

As the boy neared, I saw his expression. He looked as if he were nearing the last stretch of the Indy 500, a look of great pain and strain.

The sandy-colored curls on his head, the button nose sprinkled with a generous amount of freckles, and the brown eyes completed Bradley's face. He didn't look five, although he was. His stocky, well-built structure made him look six or seven.

Brad was nearing now, looking exhausted. The cowboy shirt was not only coming out of his pants, but was ripped in several places. His pants, minus most of the fringe, were stained with dirt and bicycle grease.

He was close now, going very fast. I thought he might run over me, but he screeched on his brakes just in time. Bradley looked up at me with a look of triumph in his eyes.

"I won," he said, and slowly peddled off.

Tracey

Truffle

Raising and training a 75 lb. Labrador Retriever isn't what it is cut out to be. One day my father piled us all into the car and we went to Wisconsin to get a dog. We came back with a 2 lb. 6 inch (at the withers) Labrador Retriever, soon to be 75 lb. 21 inches (at the withers). We named him Truffle Berwyn. He had gas all the way back in the car, and went to the bathroom twice on my rather uncomfortable brother. It took us three months to house train him and he still hasn't quite got the hang of it. Phew!.!.! Two weeks after we got him he ate three slippers, twenty-one paper plates, stole twelve plates of food (usually chicken), and chewed up the heels of my favorite hiking boots! His chewing has improved because we showered him with rawhide bones. Even when he passed the chewing stage we had trouble. The dumb animal chewed up the garbage at least twice a week! We have now solved all of his problems except for walking. When he sees a leash he goes bananas. He tears around the house attacking everything. Even my petrified brother. Truffle likes walking better than food. My mom takes him for a walk every morning, and, for laughs, my dad and I watch him walk my mom. Remember, if you are wise, you'll never buy a large dog unless you are prepared.

Rachel

She stomped up the stairs yelling in a loud, screechy voice, "Read me a story! Read me a story." Her voice carried into my room as she furiously walked down the hall. She angrily walked into my room, demanding, "READ ME A STORY!" The first thing I noticed about this seven-year-old sister was her small, fragile build. Then I wondered how could a person as small as she yell so much? Her pinkish white nightgown with green and yellow flowers was obviously too big for her. Her hair was blackish-brown and cropped close to her head. She held in her hands two things: a big brown teddy bear with a gigantic red ribbon in it and an old, dilapidated book which is what she wanted read to her. Now her eyes looked like fire. She kept on demanding that this book be read to her. She kept on saying "READ THIS TO ME!" But I said, "No, Darienne, no." "Read me a story like all big sisters. Now read me a story!" she answered. I refused to read it to her. She stood in wonder and after about a minute or two she said in a very quiet voice, "Please?"

Darice

I am very pleased with the results reading good student writing produces. Here are a few of the sketches my seventh-graders wrote last year after hearing the samples:

My five-year-old brother loves to make messes. Not just ordinary messes, but full-scale disasters. Yesterday I opened the bathroom door, and there was my brother. His bright blond hair was dripping with water. There was a dot of toothpaste on his forehead, and on his nose. Multicolors of crayon decorated his face from when he was drawing a picture earlier in the day. His greenish-brown eyes were sparkling in delight. He looked like a mad scientist standing over his greatest creation. The "creation" was a large, foaming mess in the sink. From the bottles scattered around the sink, I guessed the mess contained various kinds of shampoo, bubble bath, and toothpaste--and some of all of it was stuck to him. His tan and blue plaid shirt was decorated with splotches of pink bubble bath, and it was buttoned wrong. His faded tan corduroy Levis were worn at the knees and were covered with bubbles. His bare

tiny toes wriggled in an inch of water on the floor. When I asked him what he was doing he replied, "Just washing my hands."

Ellen

The house is quiet. I am in my room doing my homework. I hear a car drive up into our driveway. The sound is familiar. My fifteen-year-old sister, Laurie, yells goodbye to her boyfriend and slams the front door. I hear her soft footsteps on the stairs. As the telephone rings she drops all of her books on the floor, which makes the house echo with the thud. As she is laughing with Jenny, one of her many friends, she is sitting straddled in the hallway with six books spread out all around her. She says goodbye and picks up her books and jogs into her room. I hear her radio come on full blast with ELO playing. She throws her Calvin Kleins into the hamper and picks up her pink sweatshirt and red warmups. She opens her closet door to get her Adidas just as the phone rings. She runs down the hall and I hear her laughing. She finally hangs up and races down the hall again. She puts on her Adidas just as a car horn sounds in front. She turns off her stereo, picks up her winter coat and Head tennis racquet and for the last time she races down the hallway and down the stairs. As she reaches the door she yells goodbye and slams the door. I hear the car drive away and once again the house is quiet.

Kristi

My Cousin

Justin is a short, energetic three-year-old. His favorite person is Superman. Justin has a cape which he says helps him fly. Here comes the little Superman now, chugging down the hallway towards me in his red and blue Superman suit with a large diamond-shaped Superman insignia on the chest. I can see his little legs pumping up and down like a locomotive propelling him down the hall. I can see his black, curly, tousled, hair bouncing atop his head. The red cape which is tied loosely about his neck is swinging wildly behind him. His big brown eyes have the look of determination. He jumps and is air-borne for a few seconds. In midflight he runs into me and we both fall down and start laughing. I ask him why he couldn't fly and he says, "I couldn't fly because the ceiling was too low."

Darren

The final section on the evaluation guidelines, the mechanics of spelling and punctuation, is self-explanatory and can be adapted to a particular grade level.

Peer group editing, using the guidelines I have outlined, has been a rewarding experience for me, and a rewarding one for my students. At the Ohio Writing Project program this summer I polled the participants to see how many of them used peer group editing and if they were pleased with the results.

Peer Group Editing Poll
Number of Participants--37

Grade level		Use of peer editing	Rating for editing	
Elementary	8	Yes = 28	Excellent	6
Middle or Junior High	10	No = 9	Good	8
Secondary	17		Fair	9
College	2		Poor	5

I was happy to see how many teachers used this concept in their classrooms. In reading over their answers I found a wide range of methods. Some used only whole group evaluation, some had students check only mechanical errors, while others had some guidelines. By giving students concrete things to look for I hope the teachers who rated the practice as poor or fair will give the guided way a trial. I am hoping, too, that those nine teachers who have never tried peer editing will be encouraged to try it.

I want every teacher of writing to try peer group editing because James Moffett, Ken Macrorie, Peter Elbow all believe in small groups as tools for feedback in writing, and I agree with them. Tom Hawkins (1980) believes in the idea, also. He points out that it helps students in revision because verbalizing is a good procedure. He feels using peers is better than using a teacher because they are on the same social level as the students and that the social dimension is what makes it work. He points out that the learner can gain confidence by taking risks, and can profit from the added time a peer group can give him. Janet Emig, however, says it best and I agree with her when she writes:

> Finally, a shift may consequently come in who evaluates whom, and to what end. In this inquiry we have seen that the most significant others in this private, and often the school-sponsored writing of twelfth graders are peers, despite the overwhelming opportunity for domination teachers hold through their governance of all formal evaluation. American high schools and colleges must seriously and immediately consider that the teacher-centered presentation of composition, like the teacher-centered presentation of almost every other segment of a curriculum, is pedagogically, developmentally, and politically an anachronism. (1971, p. 100)

Appendix

Rating Sheet for Editors

Name of Writer _____

Name of Editor _____

Rate from 1-5

How specific were the details? _____

How vivid were the verbs? _____

How honest was the writing? _____

What was your overall feeling toward the writing? _____

How would you rate the spelling and punctuation? _____

Total _____

Comments:

Hastings Junior High School
Upper Arlington City Schools
Upper Arlington

Short Story Writing: One Step at a Time

Virginia J. Osborne

I have a friend. His name is Joe. Joe is 16. He can drive. He drove his car into a tree. Joe died.

". . . the techniques of prewriting, developed in the 1960's, will best help the student develop his authentic voice."

-Donald Stewart
Authentic Voice

How many English teachers have assigned a short story to be written for homework and received something like the above paragraph? Unfortunately, too many!

And yet there is the beginning of a good strong story there. One way to help a student develop the story from the above plot outline is to have him take some time and work with each of the story elements separately. While any of the story elements could go first, I find that characterization has worked the best in my classroom.

Characterization

One of the reasons that characterization is the best place to start is that the students identify most strongly with the character. Another is that research seems to indicate that the character is the most important part of a story. Out of the 31 articles I found relating to the elements of a story, fourteen of them were about characterization. If the audience doesn't like the character, they won't read the story.

"Because of its very nature, a short story demands that you know your characters thoroughly before you begin, for there is little opportunity--or space--to develop them as you write."

-Karl Meyer
"Building a Character Dossier"
The Writer, Sept. 1980, p. 22.

Plus, if a student has created a living, breathing person they are proud of, they want to go places with that person. The problem is how to get students to create living, breathing characters on paper.

One good way to begin is by free-associating. You might do it on the board as a group with a famous, well-developed character like Sherlock Holmes or Dorothy of Oz. After they get the idea, students can think of a list of words appropriate to their chosen character before they begin prewriting a sketch of the character.

In order to get students more involved with this assignment, I suggest that they think of someone they know who has had a problem, or who has been a problem to them.

"The group of girls were sitting in an old Chrysler at a drive-in. They were talking so loud and so fast, I couldn't make the typewriter go fast enough to capture it all."

-Richard Peck
speaking about
Representing Superdoll

Then, I ask them thought-stimulating questions to try to pin down what is so special about the person they are describing.

- What makes this person special?
- Is there anything distinctive about

the person's looks? habits? speech? walk?
- Is this person more of a hero, more of a villain, or is he somewhere in between?
- What feeling or mood is related to the person and the problem?
- What is outstanding about the person's personality? (Pride? Honesty? Humility? Conceit? etc.)
- What are the character's good points? Bad points?
- What needs to be explained about the character's looks or about the character's personality that will help explain the problem?
- Does he have any little habits like nail-biting, gum-chewing, a crooked smile, any fine point that might make him more realistic?
- What does he love? What does he hate?
- Is he rich, poor?
- Is he educated? Religious?
- What distinguishes him in a crowd?
- Love? Humor? Games? Hobbies? Courage?

. . .

"I ask myself questions that make a character come clear."

-Thomas Savage
"Creating a Character"
The Writer, Nov. 1981, p. 2

"Your characters must care a lot about something. If they don't care, your reader won't either. If the reader feels nothing, you fail."

-Phyllis A. Whitney
"Help Your Characters Be Themselves"
The Writer, Mar. 1981, p. 8.

At this point, students often think they are ready to jump into the problem, and when they do, they often come up with some clever plots. But they completely ignore setting.

Setting

Within two or three days of the character sketch assignment, have your students remember who their character was, what the problem was, and where the problem occurred.

All too often, little or no emphasis is placed on the setting in student writing, even though the setting helps to bring the characters and stories to life, bring the picture into focus, and add the mood of the story.

In a student guide to I Am the Cheese by Robert Cormier, Lou W. Stanek defines setting as:

> The physical, and sometimes spiritual, background against which the action of a narrative takes place. The principles which determine setting are: (1) the actual geographic location, its topography, scenery, and physical arrangement; (2) the occupations and daily manner of living of the characters; (3) the time or period in which the action takes place; (4) the general environment of the characters, e.g. mental, moral, social, and emotional conditions through which the people in the narrative move.

"Make sure that, wherever the action is taking place, you yourself have the scene in which it is happening completely visualized in your mind's eye. It should be as clear to you as a photograph, as a film sequence. If you, the writer, can't see it clearly, how can the reader possibly be expected to do so?"

-Joan Aiken
"Plotting the Children's Novel"
The Writer, May 1982

". . . the deepest learning takes place in a classroom where you attempt to involve students' curiosity, emotion and experience, as well as their intellect."

-August Franza
"Mind-Stretching in Your Classroom"
Media and Methods, January 1981.

I try to discuss all four of these points while showing old magazine or calendar pictures of places. Thus, once the students understand that setting is more than time and place and especially that it is often the controlling factor for the mood of a story, I ask them specific questions aimed at finding out just what is special about their particular setting.

- Where did the problem occur?
- When did it occur?
- How important are the time and place to the action?
- How can the setting be used to set the mood for the problem?
- Is there anything special or unique about the setting?
- Is there a dominant color?
- What concrete details can you use to make the setting more authentic? more visual? more mood-inducing to the audience?
- Is there something about the setting that needs to be told in order to better understand the action or the character?
- Can you choose words for the setting that describe it and set the mood at the same time? (e.g., dingy, lofty, run-down, mansion . . .)
- Is there anything strange or unusual about the place?

"Show, not tell, is the first rule we need to learn in fiction writing."

-Phyllis S. Whitney
"Help Your Characters Be Themselves"
The Writer, Mar. 1981, p. 10.

After the students have finished writing their settings they could benefit from reading them aloud to each other and hearing each other's comments on what they have written.

Now the students have a person and a place that are just rarin' for action.

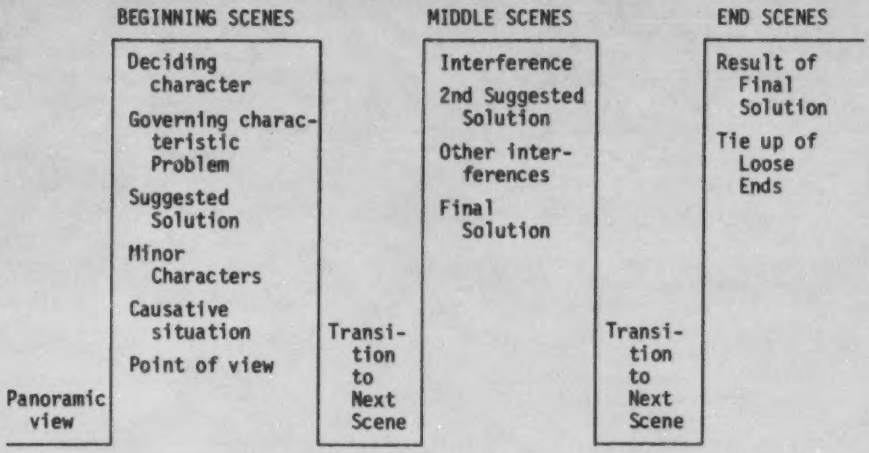
Plot

Again, what I like about this method of working with the students' stories is that it can go as deep as the students are ready to take it. Younger students will be happy to know that plot is beginning, middle, and end. Older students will be ready to add motivation and character changes to the discussion.

"Action is probably the hardest form of basic writing . . . to do well. It is easier to write that Joe and Bill had a fight, that Joe knocked Bill down and ran off . . . than it is to show all this happening with dramatic detail."

-Robert S. Aldritch
"Writing Action Scenes"
The Writer, Feb. 1981, p. 27.

The following is an excellent visual representation of the short story, its plot outline, and its needs done by Wilson R. Thornley in his book Short Story Writing.



Again I try to use a famous book or movie like Jaws or The Wizard of Oz to clarify this chart for my students, and I like to add that the main character's motivation force or trait should be explained in the beginning scenes of the story.

After a discussion of the chart and some more questions to stimulate their thinking, the students are ready to show the action, the problem in their story.

- What was the problem?
- What reactions occurred because of the problem?
- In the long run, does the conflict hurt or help the character?
- Are other characters involved? Do you need more character sketches?
- Why did the problem develop?
- What were the character's feelings at the time?
- What were the other's feelings at the time?
- How did everyone feel before and after the conflict?
- Were the character's actions consistent?
- How did the event change the character?
- Can your audience understand why the character took the action he/she took?
- What was the outcome of the problem?

Since the plot's organization and clarity can get kind of tricky, I find that now is a good time to let students exchange papers with a partner for feedback on content and fluency, not for proofreading or spelling help. After this, prewriting is finished and writing begins.

"We are learning that when we get our students to act the way writers do, they become not only better writers, but also better readers. And when their teachers act as supportive and helpful editors rather than as harsh critics, they elicit the very best from these student writers."

-Louise A. DeSalvo
"Writers at Work"
Media and Methods, December 1979, p. 16.

"If you have trouble plotting, it may simply be that you haven't considered your situation and characters and asked yourself, what could happen, what might happen, who would change, who should change."

-Camilla R. Bittle
"Plotting the Short Story"
The Writer, Feb. 1979, p. 17.

Totaling the Short Story

Returning all the sketches to the students, I now ask them to rewrite the material into one cohesive unit. The class can see right off that they can't just stick the papers together, that the entire thing asks to be interwoven. But before that happens, some decisions have to be made.

POINT OF VIEW: Who is the best character to tell the story? From whose viewpoint would the story be told most effectively? From whose viewpoint would it be most believable?

ORGANIZATION: What order does the plot take? Chronological? Flashback? Pick a beginning that gets attention or sets the mood. Save the main conflict for the end of the story.

SUSPENSE: Who is your audience? How do you want them to feel? How can you best build their feelings so that the ending leaves the impression you desire? Is the main conflict also the most emotional one in the story? (Timing may be a better word to use with some stories.)

The final product is a matter of pride to the students who really try on this project. I find that conferencing is the best way to discuss what the student has accomplished, what he may want to revise, and any misunderstandings that may have arisen.

Further benefits that I have found derive from following this plan is that, while students will not always follow these steps on their own on paper, they do seem to do some of it in their heads making their future stories a bit better. Also, they are more aware of an author's techniques when we discuss them in literature class.

". . . this study indicates that students who examine their own writing processes and participate in peer reading groups may become more involved in and excited about their writing."

-Nancy N. Holland
"Theories Can Be Applied: A Study of a Theory-Based Writing Class"
The Clearing House, February 1982

Other Suggested Activities

Do the same steps in short story writing with a fantasy unit only start with the setting and ask the students to begin by drawing their own map.

Let students get used to peer group criticism by having a Liar's Contest. Speech giving brings out a group feeling of caring and sharing that revising papers just can't.

Write the end of a story before you finish reading it.

Write a new ending for a story, maybe by letting the hero and the villain exchange places.

Add a chapter to the book, having the characters remain true to their roles.

Have a minor character retell the story from his point of view. Obviously, Huck Finn's Pap wouldn't see their story in the same light that Aunt Polly would.

Change the time of a story. Instead of a fishing rod, Huck Finn might have a ghetto blaster.

Have students design their own personal time capsules that they could open when they are thirty or thirty-five. The capsule could contain the student's pictures at various ages, an autobiography, a list of favorites, character sketches of friends and enemies, a letter of advice to his future self, a prediction of what his life will be like when he opens the capsule, a description of his family and pets, his journal he is keeping in English class, and even his best homework assignment.

New Miami High School
New Miami Local Schools
Hamilton

Using Literature and Writing to Broaden Students' Views

Marianne Meccia Perin

It is not easy being a teacher. At the end of my first hectic year, my sister, who believes that teaching means mastering subject matter, offered these words of consolation: "Just think how much easier next year will be." After five "next" years, I have come to the conclusion that teaching does not become easier but instead continually more complex and challenging. You see, Dear Sister, I am not simply teaching subject matter but children--children whose lives are not so "easy," whose minds and hearts yearn to understand our complex world. Children must learn to cope with divorce, prejudice, alternative lifestyles, death, sex, and alcoholism, to name but a few common problems

During these past five years, I have had to deal with children whose lives had been shattered from external forces beyond their control. One foreign child, Richard, lost his mother and his three little cousins in a terrifying car accident which disfigured him and threatened the loss of an eye. His father, a proud man, would not accept help, which included any "formal" type of professional counseling. I was on my own. I knew that, before I could open Richard's mind to learning, I had to unlock his heart from the chains of a horror all too real. At the same time, I had to meet the personal needs of the thirty-four other children in my class. How could I best help them all to adjust, change, understand, and deal with their daily struggles?

For an answer, I looked into my own past. As a child, I had often found great comfort in reading and writing. I took particular delight in finding a character in a story with whom I could identify. I would then pretend we were engaged in conversation as I diligently wrote out the dialogue. This helped me to gain insight into my own problems. With that in mind, I decided to combine literature and writing to help my students.

To help Richard and the class adjust to his problem, I read books with the theme of physical handicaps and stumbled upon J.T. (Wagner), a book dealing with the friendship between a ten-year-old ghetto boy and a battered alley cat. The cat loses an eye in battle and eventually is killed by a speeding car. J.T. deals with death and the loss of an eye and allowed us, as well, to study prejudice, ghetto life, one-parent families, stealing, self-image, minority groups, and finding one's place in life. We read, discussed, wrote, and role-played situational reactions the children had devised in their writings. The children responded well.

So did Richard. He returned to school two days after having his eye removed, against the wishes of his doctor. Why did he return so quickly? In Richard's own words, "I didn't want to miss school." He returned, not in fear of rejection but with a smile on his face and with pride that "An artist is painting an eye just for me!" The scars of his mother's and cousins' deaths will remain with him forever. But he learned to express his feelings, accept these sad experiences and go on with his own life.

Due to this success, I developed units of study based on other themes in contemporary realistic fiction. As Charlotte Huck states, "Realistic fiction serves children in the process of understanding and coming to terms with themselves as they acquire 'human-ness'" (p. 394). Children tend to identify with imaginative writing if the themes are accurate accounts of life. When the children ask of the stories "happened," they are not concerned with did they actually happen but with could they actually happen. In developing units, I

found that many controversial subjects (i.e., death, sex, and divorce) are covered in realistic fiction, including (according to Huck, 1976, pp. 396-450):

1. Violence
2. Sex role stereotyping
3. Survival
4. Living in a family
5. Happy family stories
6. Relationships within a family
7. Children of divorce
8. Alternative families
9. Children's rights
10. Living with others
11. Respecting religious backgrounds
12. Respecting minority groups
13. Foster children
14. Acceptance by peers
15. Developing friendships
16. Growing toward maturity
17. Developing sexuality
18. Finding one's self
19. Physical handicaps
20. Mental disabilities
21. Aging and death
22. Death and dying
23. Suicide
24. Respecting regional differences
25. Respecting world cultures
26. Understanding individuality

Probably the best place to find books with themes about children's problems is The BookFinder (Dreyer, 1977, 1981), a guide to children's literature classified according to themes, with synopses. Through such literature, I felt that I was educating the children by leading them from their own private experiences to an awareness of the whole of mankind's experience. The children found great comfort in the knowledge that they were not unique in their problems. They found not only "friends" in similar situations but also their own parents, siblings, and acquaintances and began to see life from other points of view.

Since I hold with the findings of the Plowden Report that "the best writing of young children springs from the most deeply felt experience" (Hildick, 1970, p. 156), I incorporated writing experiences along with the readings. The readings aided the children in letting down their guards of fear, rejection, and misunderstanding. The writing became the response--the key to the multitude of thoughts and feelings which they had locked away. For instance, one child discovered, after reading A Ring of Endless Light (L'Engle, 1980), that death is indeed a "confusing" unknown, that it is "normal" to go through periods of disbelief, blame, guilt, and--in the end--acceptance. She wrote:

> When I heard that my Grandfather died, I burst out into tears and said, "No!" I loved him so much! I didn't want to believe that he was dead, but I had to accept the fact that he was.
>
> When he died, everyone was very emotional and had aching hearts from the great loss, including me.
>
> Later on, I tried to blame God for what had happened. I kept saying, "Why him!" "Why not myself?" I had no answers and I was terribly confused.
>
> Finally, I learned that there is a time for everyone to go. My Grandfather's time had come. After all, I couldn't spend my whole life blaming someone for something they didn't do.
>
> My Grandfather is gone now, but it is through many loving memories that I will remember him by.
>
> By Bronwin Myers
> Grade 5

After a great amount of reading and writing in the classroom, I was delighted to read the following student work on friendship:

> What I will do for you . . .
>
> Hello I am a person. I can not give you comfort, room for your feet, fancy color or speed like a car can. I can not give you a thrilling story or facts with a lot of pages like a book can. I can not give you a sleek wrist band and the date, month, hour, minute and seconds like a watch. I can not give or be like any of

the things I just said. But I can give you love and friendship and I think that is the best.

By Damian Mager
Grade 5

The following piece by a fifth grader got the class into a discussion of women's rights:

My opinion is that women should not have that many rights as we the men have. They could get more rights than we have someday. They aren't as smart as we are and are usally fat. Most men make the money to keep the house standing. Then why should women have equal rights if they don't have equal smarts. When men were running the house we didn't have any troubles with gas. Then when women had equal rights they went driving around to bridge parties and wasting gas. First we gave them some equal rights but they were greedy and wanted more. We weren't greedy and gave them those rights. Now look whats happend to this world. Inflation on gas and other things that ruined this beautiful world.

By Jeff Mattingly
Grade 5

After reading The Great Gilly Hopkins (Paterson, 1978), in which Gilly, a belligerant foster child, writes a letter to her natural mother which is filled with lies concerning her life with her new foster family, my children wrote letters telling Gilly's mother the truth. The following is one example:

Dear Courtney Rutherford Hopkins,

I received your card. I wanted to let you know how much I love and enjoy the family that I live with.

The foster mother, Trotter, is religious, jolly and loving. She has a foster son named William Ernest who is a very slow learner, but is kind. I often help him with some of his school-work. Then there is Mr. Randolph, the next-door neighbor. He is blind, so I often read to him and he is very nice and considerate. He comes over for dinner every night.

Well, I just wanted to let you in on all the facts about my new life.

Even though I haven't been here that long, I love my family. The important thing is that they need me and I need them and we all love each other.

Yours sincerely,
Your daughter
Galadriel Hopkins

By Bronwin Myers
Grade 5

Several times throughout the year, I have the children reflect on their own lives and write "Dear Me" letters to themselves stating goals they would like to achieve by a specified time. I collect their letters and then mail them a few days before their "time's up." They read their letters and then again write on whether they reached their objectives. Here is one example:

Dear Me,

I would like to get down to business. I will tell you how to be a better person. If you could clean up after you make a mess and study a littel more and be a littel nicer you would be very nice.

from Doug

p.s. bye

The responses you get will be varied and interesting. Here are some

points to remember:

1. Be flexible. Allow the children to back off or change topics too close for them to deal with.
2. Become familiar with children's literature. Never recommend a book without reading it first to see if it is suitable for the child at that moment.
3. Never grade this type of writing!
4. Do not assume children understand a theme such as prejudice.
5. Do not wait to cover certain topics until crisis arises but try to expose the children to a multitude of resources throughout the year. Examples: Death, divorce.
6. Encourage peer group and large group discussions only if children wish to share what they have written.
7. Teacher-student conferences may be needed.
8. If a serious problem should arise, don't hesitate to refer a child to the school guidance counselor.

There are many "Richards" who may spend their lives searching for answers. Sensitive, caring teachers can, through the use of literature and writing, help these children have a better understanding of themselves and life. So, Sister, those are my challenges every year. And that's how I face them.

Uses of Literature in the Classroom to Promote Self-knowledge, Self-esteem, Clarifying of Values, and Resolving Conflicts

1. Graffiti chart--After reading story, place a large sheet of paper on a wall with story name at top. Allow children to write words, fragments or sentences to express feelings and thoughts experienced throughout the story. This can also be done individually by students to then use as a type of story starter.

2. What if???--Have the children rewrite the story to show what might have happened had the main character made a different decision, someone hadn't died, etc.

3. Character box--Using an index card, write a paragraph in the first person describing a character in a story. End with "Who am I?" On back of card, put character and title of book. Keep a running file throughout the year.

4. Have the children write comprehension questions which reflect thoughts or questions they experienced while reading. Switch papers and have another student attempt to answer one or all questions. Vocabulary words can also be included.

5. Have the children on a specified day dress as a particular character with whom they strongly identified. Have the children write an autobiographical essay on their character to be read aloud in class. Class may then guess character.

6. Write a letter to the author regarding character development, issue discussed, whether the story had personal value, etc.

7. Write a letter to a character in a book to show understanding of conflict, situation, feelings, etc.

8. Write a letter from one character in a book to another to show understanding, conflicts resolved, etc., using the same story.

9. Write a letter from one character in one book to another from another novel of same theme to show similarities of problems experienced or resolutions to problems, one of the two have found useful.

10. Write a personal experience story based on the main theme.

11. Character monologue--wishful thinking of inner thought process revealed.

12. Write dialogues between characters in a book.

13. Diary entries--Have the children keep a running diary while reading the book, discussing their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences dealt with.

14. Diary entry of character in story--Have the students assume a role of one of the characters and keep a diary in the same manner as #13.

15. Postcard writing from one character to friend or parent in another location.

16. Time line--Create a time line giving the children specific historic dates. Have the children state what historic events a character in a book would experience had he lived through that time period.

17. In class discussion, list the main characters in the story. Have the children each choose a character and rewrite the story from that person's viewpoint. Each character should have the same number of students rewriting if possible. After the stories are written, divide the children into groups containing one of each character. Allow them to read and defend their viewpoints.

18. Using books dealing with minority groups, have the children write on what similarities and differences they have found in living.

19. Compare the relationships of parents and children, two friends, teacher and student, etc.

20. Have the children find what was the most meaningful passage in the story to them and illustrate it. Then ask them to write about why it was meaningful for them.

21. Have the children find an example of cause-effect relationships. Using the same "cause," have them create a new "effect."

22. Have the children do a personality development piece showing growth in a character's life.

23. Have the children choose a scene in the story which vividly stands out in their mind and have them retell it as if <u>they</u> were there participating as a character in the story.

24. After using fables and parables, have the children write one of their choice which shows a value meaningful to them.

25. Using a binder marked "Books on Life's Experiences," have the children write brief book descriptions on books they have found useful personally. Classify according to theme discussed. Encourage the children to consult the book when they are personally in need of a book handling problems they are experiencing.

26. Have the children compare a fictional hero/heroine to someone they know centering on their personal <u>positive</u> traits.

27. Have the children write an autobiographical sketch showing some growth in their own personal maturity.

28. Dear Me letters--Have the children write a letter to themselves stating personal goals in personality development on which they wish to improve over a certain period of time. Students should address and stamp envelopes to themselves. Teacher should collect and mail the letters at a designated time. Upon receiving, children should then write on "Have I achieved my goals?"

29. What can I give you?--Have the children reflect on their qualities of being a good person and friend. Write a short poem or piece starting each line with "I cannot give you . . ." and then use ". . . but I can give you . . ." followed by their most pertinent strength.

30. Create another ending for the story.

31. Comparisons of different books on the same subject. Possibly use different age levels to see how the same theme is covered.

32. Use case studies of particular children.

33. Have the children conduct interviews with resource people who might offer further help or insight into children's problems.

34. Find an animal or insect that people show prejudice towards and explain how that creature feels abused.

35. For further uses in writing, consult Values Clarifications: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students (Simon et al., 1978).

St. Andrew School
Columbus

Using Writing in Social Studies and Science

Petra Stanton

Social studies and science have always been my favorite subjects. I like to teach them because they provide students with so much material to write about. They also offer students the opportunity to move out of the classroom in order to find information in museums and science centers, in the community and in the wilderness.

This information gathering can be enhanced by science and social studies teachers who make effective use of writing assignments. After all, writing makes students think, makes them confront new knowledge, combine it with old, and reach conclusions.

To teach writing effectively, social studies and science teachers must learn a few maxims developed over the years by composition teachers. They must help students choose appropriate audiences. For writing with only the teacher as audience is often stilted. Students can benefit by having to write from various points of view to different audiences: a diary kept by a factory worker during a strike, a speech that a king might deliver to his advisors, a letter to a newspaper concerning a contemporary issue. In social studies, students could write a newspaper, including news of events they are studying. In science, individual students could adopt a tree for a period of time during a changing season, such as spring or fall. They would observe their trees, making notations on the changes in them from day to day. At the end of the period, they could write a report with their first-hand information about that particular tree, drawing their own conclusions. After the observation is completed and the report is made, they might use reference material to see if their conclusions agree with those of authorities.

Keeping records over a length of time does more than give them an opportunity to gather information and then draw conclusions. For instance, after they keep an all-phase weather report for a month, taking readings from a thermometer, an altimeter, a wind vane, a rain gauge, and a barometer, they could then write articles for a travel magazine or for an almanac. By observing and keeping records, they "draw upon outside resources," as Irmscher (1969, p. 41) indicates they should at times.

Even tests can provide writing opportunities. An essay question properly constructed demands students give their viewpoints, not merely recall text material.

Non-composition teachers should learn that fluency comes before correctness. And they should consider ways of making meaningful assignments--short ones for some topics, long ones for others. It is best for writers to write, then worry about grammar, form, or style. As Margaret Langdon says, "One idea, or experience told simply in two words or two lines is surely better than two pages filled with meaningless words . . ." (1975, p. 212).

A teacher can read some of the papers to the class. This gives students the different approaches or methods the students used in writing the papers. Peer groups can provide similar opportunities on a smaller scale and take some of the burden off the teacher. Such groups also provide opportunities for students to revise their writing--an important element in improving writing quality.

Teachers have a responsibility to help their students acquire the knowledge that writing is a means of classifying information and is an aid in organizing their ideas. Writing can be a vehicle used to make social studies and science more exciting to students. Writing about a lesson brings something special to the learner.

Bay Middle School
Bay Village City Schools

Art and Writing for Junior High Students

Pamela Collins

Consider the time you ripped off an angry letter to the store manager at the department store where you bought your latest pair of shoes, only to get home and find that the right one was a size 8½ narrow and the left one was an 8½ medium. Or . . . the letter you delivered to the principal the day after your son was kept after school and paddled, supposedly because he turned in very little homework the whole grading period. You, yourself, had coerced him to sit at the kitchen table every night and helped him do it. You felt more anguish than he did.

Or . . . the note you wrote to your Father on his Father's Day card thanking him for the years of time, money, and love he'd shared with you.

Last night after the Fourth of July picnic, Aunt Tilly ran over Rover in your very own driveway. That had been his domain for eleven years, and he was exactly where he was supposed to be. Aunt Tilly was childless and she loved Rover almost as much as you did. So, you wrote her a note.

It's easier to write if we can respond emotionally. We all have personal experiences from which to draw. Consider for a moment the student's point of view. A classroom is not very conducive to conjuring up those sensitive feelings--especially when Richard sits next to you and he's the most desirable prospect for the after-game dance next Friday night. Emotions are stirring right now, but you don't dare even write his name in your journal for fear--horror of horrors--he might glance into your notebook. (Obviously, you'd only pen the note in a nonthreatening context.)

Art, in our classrooms, can trigger just the kinds of safe, nonthreatening emotional reactions students can write about. There are many forms of art available to our students that evoke a response. Music, theatre, dance, paintings, and even our surroundings provide stimuli, because we all react to some degree to the same stimuli. The following activities cash in on our students' needs for such abundant, varied, emotionally "safe" subject matter.

Let students sift through magazines to find an ad that particularly appeals to them. Keep in mind you are asking them to respond. The ad they choose may not necessarily appeal to you in a positive way. Or, expose them to prints. One of my favorites is "Cool Cardinal," by Charlie Harper. The cardinal is depicted majestically perched on a high wire. The day is gray. During a snowstorm, geometric, hail-sized snowflakes are falling all around, and a crown of snow has accumulated on his head and on the wire. He seems to be there for the duration . . . . Let students react in writing to their emotional responses to the print. This free response provides a good beginning for all kinds of writing--narrative, descriptive, or argumentative. The greatest thrill for me during my beginning writing phase at the Ohio Writing Project was the reaction of a peer when I read aloud my journal entry response to Harper's "Cool Cardinal." My cohort blurted out "I've seen that picture. It's hanging in my lawyer's office, but I never knew who the artist was." I felt very proud that I was able to describe something so vividly. Your students will feel much the same.

Most students find the activity fun, as you do if you choose a favorite artist. One of my favorite artists is Charlie Harper, a Cincinnati wildlife artist, who would say about his own work that it is just an arrangement of straight and curved lines. Although his prints are depicted in a whimsical

way, they reflect excellent details of each animal and its habitat. Even the titles suggest a touch of lightheartedness. Who would think that the following titles would portray zebras, raccoons, or praying mantises: "Cool Cardinal," "Serengetti Spaghetti," "Watermelon Moon," "Pelican in a Downpour," "The Last Sunflower Seed," and "Wedding Feast." Did you know that the female praying mantis eats the male after copulation? Charlie's version of the story is as follows:

The Wedding Feast

> A rose is a rose is a rose, but Ms. Praying Mantis is the ultimate feminist. Don't romanticize her mating--this predatory female is a potential connubial cannibal. Many a male has learned too late that her intent is not wholly matrimony, and that the way to her heart is through her stomach. Their affair is brief--infatuation, consummation, mastication--and the ceremony is simple, but tasteful--to have and to hold till death do us part. A burp is a burp is a burp.

When observing a Charlie Harper print, it is easy to see the connection among emotional responses, art and the printed work. "Buzz Off, You Turkeys" portrays a bunch of buzzards condescending to a turkey-buzzard. "Prickly Pear" shows a porcupine making lunch of a prickly pear cactus, and contrasts the quills of the porcupine with the spines on a cactus. Students of all ages can enjoy the humor, and their emotional involvement stimulates good writing. Students will be eager to freewrite their responses.

Many art galleries are glad to share copies of out-dated mailers and publicity ads with teachers. Court Galleries in Cincinnati, Ohio, was kind enough to provide materials for my classes. The Taft Museum has inexpensive slides of their collection for sale. Slides encourage writing and expose children to new artists, many they might never know. Furthermore, magazines are filled with ads and libraries frequently supply school teachers with out-of-date material.

Students must be made aware that art surrounds them. Observe the classrooms they like best, or the spot in the classroom where they choose to write. Let's provide stimulation in as many ways as we can, and make the students aware of what they see. I was pleased with the finished product the day we decided to "sell our classroom." The student who wrote the best ad, and sold the room, would receive an imaginary commission. As a group, we compiled a list of selling points--and students became aware of their surroundings. They discovered quite a few assets: central location, ample parking, playground, babysitting services available, spacious room seats sixty, large windows with view, birds chirping, mature trees, clean air, janitorial services, chalkboards, ample electrical outlets, projector and screen, fully furnished, secretarial services available. The details will astound you! With this base, we discussed the purposes of the room and what kind of groups might want to rent it. Using this information, students eagerly wrote their ads and could hardly wait to read them.

Three-dimensional art that can be touched as well as seen promises a reaction. Did you ever try to describe a Rubics Cube to Aunt Tilly? Younger students enjoy reaching into a paper bag, feeling an object that they can't see, and describing it. This is a perfect opportunity for a writing experience.

Some students hesitate at first to share their writing. Here's a good ice-breaker: have them pretend for a moment that they are archeologists on a dig. The year is 2200. The location is what is presently their own backyard. They must describe something they found without naming it. Obviously, the descriptions must be vivid, or the other students can't guess what it is. They enjoy sharing and exchanging this information. Reading aloud and hearing other students' reactions will instill in them a confidence no teacher could inspire.

We all know that kids come in all flavors, and that we as teachers should help them explore and savor the ones they like best. The diverse writing activities that art provides help us do that. While we show art, we show students their emotions.

Kennedy Junior High School
Newark City Schools
Newark

Developing a Composition Sequence for Junior High School:

A Moffett-Inspired, Milam-Modified Guide

Larry Milam

Thomas Hogan (1980) reports that interest in writing is higher than the interest in other subject areas during grades three to six. In fact, he reports a peak in grade four. This interest, however, declines sharply in grades six to eight. One possible explanation for this drop in interest in writing activities is Stephen Judy's finding (1981) that " the junior high English curriculum can best be characterized as 'Basic Hodge-podge'" (p. 59). I agree fully with Judy. After more than a decade of teaching senior high school English and French, I received a transfer to junior high school English composition. My unbounded joy quickly dissipated when I considered my new challenge. All our students have two English classes. In language arts they read literature and develop vocabulary. In English composition they study grammar and spelling and writing. I blanched even further to learn that all six of my teaching periods would be in English composition. Then, my own apprehension began to surface. I am not a strong speller; I always have a dictionary at hand when I write. "Oh, well," I thought, "I certainly know grammar all right." My relief was short-lived when I realized that although I recognize a preposition immediately, I was completely bewildered by the thought of explaining what one was to a twelve year old.

"Writing will be my salvation," I informed a colleague who could not believe I wanted the transfer. After all, I am the teacher that our graduates always gave much credit for preparing them for freshman English. In fact, their praise was one thing principals always mentioned on my evaluations. Apprehension ballooned into panic when I realized that nearly all my writing assignments had been based on literature selections and that I would not be teaching any literature classes. A quick look through our curriculum guide evoked more terror instead of inspiration. Chatting with other English teachers and reading professional journals gave me a few good ideas, but I could never seem to find a unifying thread. Seven years of my own experience and observation of other teachers force me to agree with Judy that all too frequently junior high school English programs have no particular sense of purpose, no sense of direction, and no cumulative effect. Surely there must be some logical sequence to promote growth in writing skills. Such a sequence, of course, must consider not only the students' linguistic skills but also their maturity. Many of the curriculum guides completely disregard these two factors. Fortunately, I discovered James Moffett's work. His suggestions offered me valuable replacements for all my own inventions that I had abandoned because they did not work.

Moffett's sequence (1973) suggests that junior high students start with acting and speaking activities. These, of course, are prewriting activities. In addition to preparing students to write better, they may even help with misbehavior problems. School personnel generally agree that many problems such as destruction of property and open rebellion against authority begin in junior high school. Behavior specialists tell us that many of these problems arise because schools do not allow students to deal with their energy and emotions. Students in early adolescence simply are not ready to sit quietly with book, paper, and pencil all day. What better way to release pent-up energy than through scribbling one's thoughts?

Teachers need to accept that drama is a central part of the English curriculum, not a little something extra to reward good behavior. Neither should it be regarded as an acceptable replacement for an incomplete lesson plan. Drama periods offer several possible activities. Moffett suggests that students in junior high school begin with a continuation of pantomime, charades, improvisations, and enactments that they practiced in

elementary school. Because I had seen teachers use these activities to fill time and to substitute for planning, I resisted them for years. Formerly I scoffed when my students said, "I don't have anything to write about. I haven't done anything all year except come to school, and nothing ever happens here. Well, I watch a little TV." Now I see that for too many of them school consists of sitting at assigned desks and pretending to listen.

My classroom now not only allows but requires some physical movement of pupils. It is easy to go from these simple ideas to such areas as enacting a scene from a story or a scripted scene from a play, but it is the drama periods themselves that are important. Let me echo Moffett and remind the teacher that what is important is the doing of the drama, not an Oscar-winning stage performance.

At first the scarcity of short published plays for junior high students may appear a problem. Actually this shortage is a blessing; it provides a reason to have students write their own. Someone writing a play obviously writes dialogue, plus description, and frequently narration. Playwriting also produces some fine examples of peer editing. The young author who thinks the instructor is being picky will pay attention when his classmates in the group tell him that they cannot tell how to read the line from the way he punctuated it. He may protest a bit, but he will redevelop the character if they tell him that they don't know what kind of person the character is. He may even attempt to write more clearly if the students insist that they cannot read his handwriting. If students have literature and composition in the same class, the instructor can easily have them dramatize a scene from a short story or a poem.

Moffett encourages plenty of oral experimentation with fragments of dialogue, but since we are concerned with a writing sequence, we have to start putting some words on paper. When the students start to record short segments of dialogue, the instructor should encourage them to use their own experiences for the subject matter. All of us have read borrowed stories that resulted from students pulling characters and action from the farthest reaches of their imaginations. My own experience supports Moffett's advice to allow those students who insist on writing far-fetched material to do so. Their classmates will quickly tell them whether the situation is satisfactory. A "Hey, make it real, man," from Tommy gets much more serious consideration than a "Do you think you should try more realism?" from Mr. Milam.

Moving from dramatic dialogue to Socratic dialogue, the next step in a Moffett-based curriculum, should not trouble most students. The setting may remain or simply disappear. The teacher can suggest that the group drop the stage directions and broaden the topic a bit. Widening the subject may require more aid from the instructor. Again I encourage teachers to heed Moffett's suggestion to encourage students to write on topics they have first-hand knowledge of. Otherwise, the teacher may find herself reading much repetition of someone else's words. I also offer my support for mixing the writing of Socratic dialogue with small group discussion and panel discussion. These discussions give the student a purpose for her writing and allow her to benefit from her peers' opinions.

I nearly threw out Moffett less than half way through his suggested junior high school sequence when I read that the dramatic monologue was a logical assignment following Socratic dialogue. "Surely the man jests. I thought he had been in classrooms recently," I thought as my hopes sank. "Look how my college-bound seniors struggled with dramatic monologues after careful analysis of 'My Last Duchess' and 'Andrea Del Sarto,'" I practically shouted aloud. If Robert Browning's beautiful poetry had not been sufficient inspiration for mature adolescents, certainly I, a mere mortal, would never motivate young adolescents to produce such a work. After some rumination I remembered that I, the notoriously strict grader, the chief purveyor of red ink, had given a former student, Scott, 100% on a dramatic monologue. That was the first time in ten years of teaching that I had given a perfect score

on a composition. That monologue still stands out in my mind. I think I could almost quote it. Scott normally wrote beautifully, but I was convinced that some special muse had descended from Mt. Olympus with the inspiration for this work. Keeping this achievement in mind, I consented to finish reading Moffett's work. He wrote that dramatic monologue just naturally appears in drama while students are doing improvisations. That certainly was a different approach from mine. I had to admit that most of my students, and I for that matter, could recall a family discussion that temporarily became a lecture from a parent. I had heard pupils scheming to regain the affection of a sulking friend. Certainly I had seen boys do superb imitations of a coach. Once more, I decided to give Moffett a chance. I do not think that any teacher with a year or more of experience would argue with his assertion that students are more likely to understand the technique used by authors of monologues if they have written monologues themselves. In fact, each year I become more convinced that students comprehend most concepts better if they see what the writer is doing instead of hearing the teacher explain the technique later.

Students who have followed Moffett's suggested sequence in seventh and eighth grades generally are able to write interior monologue as ninth graders. If students need more practice in the forms studied earlier, interior monologues can easily be postponed until high school. Because interior monologues sometimes wander into the past and sometimes ponder the future, they often contain elements of narration and personal essay. Once again, better monologues usually result when students write about their own experiences. Certainly they must use their imaginations, but those vivid imaginations must be tempered with reality. After students have written several monologues, a teacher may suggest writing a soliloquy for a character studied in literature. The exercise often increases the students' comprehension and also allows the teacher to check comprehension.

Moffett recommends doing both dramatic and narrative writing during the junior high years. The first step of narrative writing is writing from memory. The instructor needs to stress that the situation is to be one single incident. Otherwise, the writing may consist of numerous generalities and no details. Normally from a series of personal memory stories an autobiographical incident emerges. The teacher may find it necessary to focus the incident for the student. An occasional student may not understand that the event is to be one in which he was the main character. I am especially fond of this section and find increasing success as I use it with my own junior high students.

During this autobiographical period I urge teachers to return to the pantomimes and charades that the students did at the very beginning of junior high. My own pupils, especially those in lower level classes, produce some of their most vivid writing as they recall their feelings about performing the first few times. When Diana, whom I occasionally feared mute, wrote, "I felt like a big ugly rat that got into the cat show instead of the cheese shop," I both recoiled and rejoiced. Knowing that I had made the most diffident child in the class uncomfortable troubled me, but the comment revealed enough about her for me to start devising a strategy to get her to reveal more about herself.

Perhaps it strikes some as strange, but I find this an effective time to engage in some fantasy writing of a sort. Students who are reluctant to write about aspects of their own lives willingly write lengthy autobiographical sketches of a piece of bubble gum, their gym shoes, a tennis racket, and numerous other objects. One of my own most successful devices, purloined years ago from some unremembered source, is to have students take off a shoe, trace their foot, cut out the foot, and then write an autobiographical incident involving their paper foot.

Autobiographical sketches lead easily to human nature incidents. Younger junior high students adore describing their friends caught in an out-of-the-

ordinary situation. When everyone is doing something unusual, no one feels singled out by the group. Some of my students produce remarkably detailed observations of their classmates who were doing charades and improvisations.

Along with human and nature incidents students may practice reporting. In the memory sketches, students write only what they remember, but in reporting they write exactly what they observe. My own seventh graders invariably ask questions about letters to the editor whenever we take up the reporting section. Their questions have convinced me that the reporting area is a logical time to take up letter writing. I had never liked teaching this writing; my efforts invariably reflected a stark lack of success. This spring, strictly by accident, I learned that sufficient motivation produces vastly superior letters. I gave a lower level group an assignment they considered unreasonable. Stung by their accusations, I distributed unlined paper and calmly but sarcastically intoned, "Fine, you may write a letter of complaint about me to our board of education." Their raised eyebrows received only a "Yes, I'm serious." As they continued to regard me with a mixture of fear and puzzlement, I demanded, "Well, what are you waiting for--Divine Inspiration? Granted, you need it, but I haven't seen any evidence of any acquaintance with anything divine in any of you." They sat, amazed; apparently they had offended me more than they had intended. Then one brave thirteen-year-old ignited his comrades by asking, "May I borrow your pen? I don't want to write a letter as important as this one in pencil." Suddenly infused with courage, adolescents beseiged me with such questions as "What's an acceptable greeting for a group with both men and women? I certainly can't use gentlemen, can I?" "Will you check my letter before I take it home to type it?" came from a girl who normally covered her paper whenever I walked by her desk. Another voice demanded, "Are we supposed to put a comma or a colon after the greeting if the board president is a family friend?" Such questions lightened the mood as the period continued, and the next day those students gave me the best papers that they turned in all year.

In a Moffett-suggested sequence, poetry of observation follows the narrative period. One argument that English teachers always hear against requiring students to write poetry is that it is a ridiculous waste of time for students because so few of them become poets. This argument ignores the fact that writing poetry develops precision and style. Those who repeatedly attempt poetry develop a sharp eye for sensuous, concrete details. No one denies that these details serve the writer well in exposition.

For several years the haiku has been a highly popular type of writing assignment at all levels. But Moffett argues against teaching haiku at elementary levels. My experience forces me to agree with him. I do not doubt that a few of the elementary teachers receive some excellent results from their haiku units, but I believe these examples are rare. The haiku attempts that I have seen by elementary students are mere clichés, completely lacking the tightness required of a highly sophisticated form. Since the haiku requires acute observation, it is a logical follow-up to reporting. The haiku deserves extensive work in the junior high curriculum because, though short, it is a complete composition. The haiku provides excellent training in detailed observation, opportunities to express emotions in concrete terms, and a chance for the writers to analyze their own language.

Comparing two different translations of the same haiku can be an effective lead to other types of poetry. Moffett suggests especially those types written by Emily Dickinson and Carl Sandburg. I find this a particularly effective time to work with figurative language. I repeatedly see teachers stressing the difference between simile and metaphor when students would gain much more by reading and writing many poems with similes and metaphors. Instead of memorizing definitions and searching for the like or as, the student more fully grasps the concept of analogy by making a single comparison the form of the entire poem. Moffett summarizes the issue by writing, "One learns metaphor out of the need . . . to make the unknown known . . . or to make the familiar unfamiliar. . ." (p. 370).

The last step that Moffett recommends in a junior high curriculum is journals and diaries. These writings, while types of narratives, differ from the other narrative types that students have composed. Journal and diary writings usually reflect happenings of only a day or two earlier, but autobiographical writing often deals with events remembered from many years earlier. The word diary carries a negative connotation for some people, but it provides regular writing. Diaries record details of their historical period, record ideas that may be useful in other writing assignments, emphasize the importance of events occurring at the time, and record both earlier and later views of the same happening.

Moffett suggests assigning a digest of the diary, reducing it to about one-third to one-fourth its original length. This reduction obviously creates some problems for many students. The chief problem is that if there is little of value in the diary, there is likely to be little of value in the summary. Deciding what details to omit also troubles students since reducing without becoming too general is difficult. Every teacher knows that organizing a unified paper from miscellaneous subjects is a formidable task. Although diary summary may be postponed until later years, such postponement is not necessary. Whether students see their diary entries as one-of-a-kind separate entries or as examples of common happenings, the diary summary allows them to go beyond narrative.

Some teachers find a public journal an attractive alternative to the diary. Small group discussions provide suggestions for summarizing and help students compose better abstractions. The diary may create more expressiveness, but the journal creates more learning. A specialized journal is another possible aid to the abstraction problem. In this assignment the student explores some particular area of his life. It may be a school subject, a hobby, a family relationship, a friendship, or whatever interests him. This type of journal is a kind of research, and summaries of such journals offer excellent preparation for expository writing. The most recommended sequence starts with a private written-in-class diary and moves to writing short specialized journals. The third step is writing one long journal, really a summary of various specialized journals. The final step is a summary of the long miscellaneous journal.

All in all, I've found my move to the junior high more fulfilling and more fruitful than I might ever have dreamed. With Moffett's guidebook, my modifications, and my wealth of new ideas from the Ohio Writing Project, I'm convinced I'll never need "letters to the Board of Education" again--except as commendations, of course.

Teays Valley Junior High School
Teays Valley Local Schools
Ashville

Using the Newspaper to Teach Writing

Joseph A. Hayberger

When I looked at the major project assigned in the Ohio Writing Project, I was mindboggled. Write a 2,000 to 3,000 word paper on the teaching of writing. It took awhile for the shock to subside.

I tried to remember something, anything, that I used in my class to stimulate writing. Almost two days passed before I came to a topic. While I walked to the OWP class, I brainstormed with a friend some possible choices. The idea came like a flash of light. Of course, why didn't I think of it before? I used the newspaper in class and with, what I felt, a great deal of success. At last a topic! How relieved I felt at getting something I could sink my teeth into.

I first started to use the newspaper two years ago. I liked to discuss current news topics in class whenever I felt it was appropriate. I found out quickly that sixth grade students did not know the parts of a newspaper. Their main concern was the sports, for the boys, Dear Abby, for the girls, and the comics, for most of them. I decided that I needed a tailored lesson plan so that students could, at least, learn the different parts of the newspaper. I designed activities that encouraged them to identify and to bring to class examples of international, national, state, and local news, exercises that helped them distinguish among different types and assignments of news stories in sports, comics, editorials, and other sections of the paper. For instance, students had to write short descriptions of specific articles. I not only wanted them to be able to find the articles, but also to be able to read and understand what they reported.

Next, I had students do an activity which was to change my thinking about a newspaper's use. The class was instructed to cut out shapes from the papers, irregular or regular, of people, animals, or whatever, and then arrange and mount them to form a picture on a piece of construction paper. They were further instructed to write a short paragraph on their art work. Their paragraph was to explain what their art work was and what it did. They laughed. They had fun. The next day most were eager to share their abstract art work and their strange stories. I noted the intensity and willingness that this fun activity had brought out of my class. Thus, with a little direction, they were able to use their imagination and make a beginning in the process of writing. "Writing is a greater challenge to the imagination than talking" (Irmscher, 1979, p. 20). It was then that I recognized that writing with the newspaper was more important than knowing the parts of the newspaper. I definitely knew I was going to try something different the following year. I once had a seventh grade gym teacher who (like everyone else's seventh grade gym teacher) told me, "If something is worth doing, then it is worth doing right." However, now I know I must add the words, ". . . but you must have fun doing it." Last year my class had fun using the newspaper as a source for writing exercises.

From that first successful exercise, I've developed a number of activities with newspapers to help students overcome the anxiety of writing. "Writing is overcoming inhibitions. Writing is getting started. Writing is opening up. Writing is controlling. Writing is matching words to thoughts. Writing is feeling as well as thinking," according to Irmscher (1979, p. 29), and the newspaper is a good confidence builder.

Realizing that I must adapt the activities to my grade level, I always

start with cartoons, because students love cartoons and identify with the characters. After I selected a cartoon strip, I emptied the dialogue balloons of words, using white-out and a Xerox machine. Each student received a copy of the strip. They did their work in groups or by themselves, writing new captions for the balloons. At the end of class, students decided which version of the cartoon was funniest and compared it to the original. Next, I took a strip and cut the cartoons into their separate boxes to mix the order. The groups then would have to determine the correct order. Afterward we discussed organization and sequence. While not every assignment produced a sentence, a paragraph, or a short story, the activities were good prewriting assignments.

Next we moved to alliteration. I had students print their names, vertically, on a sheet of paper with one letter under the other. Then, they were to find words from the newspaper which began with the same letter as the letter in the name. Those words were to describe them or be like them in some way. If they found a word with the correct initial letter whose meaning they did not know, they were to look up its meaning--to see if it applied to them. Alliteration provided quite a bit of spark among my students to see who could find the most alliteration in newspaper headlines. One of my favorite prewriting activities was the elaborative thinking exercise, or as I liked to call it, the "brain stretcher." I located a human interest story and placed on the chalkboard two to three sentences from the introduction to the article, not revealing too much detail. I then asked them to write five to eight statements about things that might have happened following the event in the opening sentences. The idea was to get them to "stretch their brains" into imaginative language. I then read the original story and we talked about their reactions to it, emphasizing words the writer used to create emotion. If I wanted my students to write expressively then what better example than a story of that type.

Two activities led to especially vivid descriptive writing. First, the students enjoyed reviewing. After they studied reviews, they thought of something they did every day that was not ordinarily reviewed, such as eating a hamburger at McDonald's, ironing a blouse, babysitting a younger brother, or carrying out the garbage. I constantly stressed that they had to make their audiences feel the way they had felt about their event. That was a fun exercise that masked its real intent of having students writing descriptively. Next, I discovered that newspaper photos were good invention sources. I searched for vivid action photos, cut them apart from their stories, and gave each group one of the pictures to write a news story about. Then they compared their stories with the originals. Such activities stimulated interest, overcame anxiety, and provided lots of practice.

After I read Ken Macrorie's "The I-Search Paper" (1980a), I decided I would like to interview a newsperson. I wanted to get his view on how he felt a newspaper might be useful in the classroom. I contacted Jim Brown, Managing Editor of the Sandusky Register, who agreed to meet with me. We settled down one evening for a chat:

JH: Jim, as the managing editor, what are your responsibilities?
JB: My number one responsibility is running the newsroom. Also, I set policy, hire and fire, give the final word on picture and story placement, design and edit the front page, and write editorials.
JH: How long have you worked at the paper?
JB: I've got approximately eighteen years of experience.
JH: Does anyone visit the schools and talk to the students about newspaper writing?
JB: Yes, in fact I usually do. I usually talk about the satellite dish and how it works and then open the talk to questions from the students. I am never amazed at the type of questions they ask.
JH: I might be putting you on the spot, but if you could teach sixth graders expressive writing and your only textbook was a newspaper,

how would you do it? What activities might you have them try? Don't be concerned with grammar and punctuation.

JB: That's quite a task. I think I would concentrate on using feature stories as my source for examples. I would try to point out the descriptive words that are used. For instance, instead of saying "the car" the writer of an article would say "the sleek racing car zoomed . . ." The key is that the description must paint a mental picture for your readers. Details with descriptive writing produce the emotions and feelings you want your readers to share. What activities would I want them to try? Possibly describing something simple including as many details as possible. Just keep doing it and doing it. Practice makes perfect as they say.

That concurred with my thoughts exactly. I knew that I was definitely going to have him talk to my students about that aspect of writing.

JH: Finally, in your opinion, what is the best reason that you can think of for using the newspaper as a writing source?

JB: It's your community. You know the people, the events may have happened in your background. It's realistic. It's now, not yesteryear. It takes you behind closed doors. It reveals the lives of ordinary people. It helps you to live other people's experiences. It's just a wealth of daily people events that they can relate to.

I thanked Jim Brown for his time and went home to put my interview together. The interview reinforced my belief that descriptive wording did play a big role in emotional writing and that the newspaper was a prime example for my students to learn from. An additional benefit was the opportunity of using a newsperson as a guest speaker.

The newspaper is a tremendous tool in the writing class. It gives students confidence in themselves, expands their imaginations, and helps them enjoy writing. Maybe, when my students attend their first Ohio Writing Project workshop they will be able to tackle their assignments with much more courage than I had that first night in June of 1982.

Additional Activities

Please adapt, adopt, inject, reject, or whatever, these activities to fit the needs of your students.

1. After examining the components of a news story with your students, have the children write a news story about a favorite book.
2. An exercise identifying expressive and vivid verbs can be done by students clipping them from the paper and adding them to their own vocabulary list.
3. Select headlines from the newspaper which your students can change to complete sentences.
4. Read the weather section of the newspaper aloud to your students. Have the children write a poem about the day's weather.
5. Have the students find and read the Lost and Found ads. Ask them to write a story behind one of these ads, pretending they are the animal or thing that was lost.
6. Choose an interesting advertisement in the newspaper. Allow your students to create a radio or television commercial utilizing the information from the newspaper or advertisement.
7. Clip out newspaper articles of people in the entertainment, sports, political, etc., fields who are making news. Encourage the students to read these articles. Have them select one of these people. Have them

follow this person's activities by keeping a scrapbook using newspaper clippings.

8. Helping People--our society has many services to help people. Look in today's paper and find a story about helping someone else. Read the story. Do you think the person needed help? Why or why not?

9. Pretend you're going into the donut business. Every Saturday morning you have a route in your neighborhood selling donuts. How do you drum up new business for your donuts? Prepare an ad. You do the writing and the art work. Paste it all together. If you need suggestions, study the ads in the newspaper.

10. Opposites--black and white . . . how many opposites can you find? Look through the newspaper and make a list of all the opposites you can find. Put some of your opposites together in a crazy sentence.

Mills Elementary School
Sandusky City Schools
Sandusky

Expository Paragraph--A Challenge to Students

Charles R. Millheim

To become a better writer, one must write. The more time spent writing, the greater the improvement. Certainly there must be direction and purpose to this writing, but the largest advances will come through the actual physical and mental process of writing. Through extensive practice in paragraph writing, specifically, students can learn to express their thoughts logically and coherently.

I have students write approximately two paragraphs per week. At the beginning of the course, students write one of the paragraphs on a transparency. Then, we share the paragraphs to discuss the basics of the topic sentence, major and minor supports, and any similar problems students share.

After three to four weeks, emphasis should swing toward revision. After the first few weeks of learning the structure of the expository paragraph, students must work and rework paragraphs. It is through the revision of their writing that most of their improvement will occur, so during this second stage of the course, I have them revise each paragraph at least once.

By this time in the semester, I spend much class time in conferences with my students, because the student learns more by writing than by listening. Any teacher aids students most by helping them create and revise paragraphs. And conferences needn't be long. Almost always, more can be accomplished in a three- or four-minute personal conference than in a forty-three minute general lecture.

One form of paragraph writing is the topic sentence with three majors, two minors, and a closing sentence as developed by John Ostrom in Better Paragraphs. Although not followed completely and with a few modifications, the student can learn to move from the general to the specific.

In dealing with the first days of work it is wise to have the students make a list of ten to twenty topics that they are interested in. By doing this the teacher will allow the students to choose their area of interest. This also allows for fluency and creativity on the students' part.

The Topic Sentence

The topic sentence contains the subject and controlling idea for the paragraph. It accurately and concisely tells the reader what the paragraph is about. Although a topic sentence may be found in a number of places within the paragraph, for this course it should be the first sentence in the paragraph.

Requirements of a Topic Sentence

I. It must have a subject and a controlling idea (attitude).
II. The controlling idea must be capable of development.
    1. Distinction between a topic sentence with a controlling idea and one that begins and ends with the sentence itself.
        a. Franklin conducted his famous kite experiment in June 1752.
        b. Franklin's famous kite experiment was aimed at proving that lightning is electricity.
    2. a. The colonists fought the British at the battle of Breed's Hill.
        b. The battle of Breed's Hill showed that the colonists were brave men.
III. The topic sentence must not be too broad.

1. Distinguish between a topic sentence which is too broad and one that is limited enough to be developed in a single paragraph.
   a. Napoleon was one of the great generals in history.
   b. At Austerlitz Napoleon showed that he was a great strategist.

IV. The topic sentence must not be too specific.

V. Avoid vagueness in a topic sentence.
   1. When I was a child I spent a great deal of time with my grandfather who never criticized me.
   2. All through my childhood my grandfather Martin was my favorite relative.

Topic Sentence Examples

1. The drilling of oil in the Gulf of Mexico this year, by the Exxon Corporation, has caused considerable damage to small sharks.
2. When the Gulf Oil Corporation was found to have illegally given money to the ruling Korean political party in 1975, the reputation of all American corporations was tarnished.
3. If laws concerning the dumping of pollutants into Porter Creek by the Donn Products Corporation are not enforced in the next three years, Bay Village will have their largest creek become a sewage tank.
4. Busing from Cleveland to Bay Village's protected environment will bring drastic changes to the lives of future Bay Village High School students.
5. The constant battle for military dominance between the United States and the Soviet Union wastes the American taxpayer's money.
6. A series of test flights made on the X-15 subspace jet during the later 1950s proved invariably to scientists that a man can endure outer space.
7. Upon observing modern-day Nebraskan farmers, one may come to the realization that farming can no longer be synonymous with the word "toil."
8. The superlative diplomacy displayed by President John F. Kennedy throughout the course of the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 eventually became the deciding factor between nuclear war and peace.
9. By the mid 1930s, the unspeakable Dust Bowl disaster had permeated into another crack of doom in the United States' miserably unbalanced economy.

Paragraph of Detail

I. Detail Supports and Paragraphs

"Detail support" is classified as one of the following:

a. An observable fact in physical concrete description.
b. A requirement, rule, or regulation.
c. A step or procedure for instruction.
d. A statistic--recorded data or words.

A "detail" paragraph must have only detail supports. Each major and each minor must be a detail as classified above. All detail paragraphs must have at least three majors and two minors for each major. The only exception to this rule is the "procedure" paragraph. In this type of paragraph, the number of majors and minors will be determined by the necessary instructions that the reader will need to know if he is to follow and understand the procedure's purpose, steps, and outcome. All detail paragraphs can be a combination of any of the four types of detail except the "procedure" paragraph. The

procedure paragraph must have each major presented as a step of the procedure.

COIN COLLECTION
(Student's Paper)

TS To coin collectors, the demand a United States coin receives determines its value. 1 Mintage, the number of coins struck, determines a coin's rarity and consequently its value. A The United States keeps an official record of the number of coins minted by each mint. B In various years, a mint only produces a small number of coins, making these coins difficult to obtain and in demand. II The proportion of the original mintage that has been lost or destroyed causes the demand and value of a coin to vary. A Some coins are actually rarer than evidenced by the mint because a large portion of these coins have been lost or destroyed. B When enough of a particular coin is lost or destroyed such that the supply cannot meet the demand, the coin increases in value. III The value of a particular coin depends heavily on the coin's condition. A Small quantities of coins are minted especially for collectors in proof condition, a special condition in which a coin resembles a mirror. B According to the degree of wear, standard coins are graded on a scale of uncirculated to fair. 1 Uncirculated coins have never been in general circulation and do not have any wear or scratch marks. 2 The other grades, which apply to circulated coins, are determined by the wear on the coin's high spots and words. FS The value of a United States coin is determined by the demand the coin receives.

Paragraph of Reason

A reason support is a statement based on logic and opinion. A reason support may use details (not be a detail) to form a rationale to a statement based on opinion.

The most commonly used "reason" support is the explanation or "because" statement. A "because" major is a reason why the controlling idea is true. A "because" minor is a reason why its major is true. Therefore, the word, "because," can be used as a test word if it is mentally inserted between two statements. For example, say the controlling idea aloud . . . insert the word "because" . . . now say the major aloud.

Other forms of reasoning can be used. One form is called supposition and is usually found as an "if . . . then" statement. Another form of reasoning is conclusion drawing. This statement is usually introduced with one of the following transitions: therefore, in conclusion, obviously, consequently, thus, and so.

For the reason paragraph, all three forms of reasoning (the "because," reason, the supposition, and the conclusion) are perfectly acceptable; however, caution must be used when drawing a conclusion. Remember, most topic sentences of a reason paragraph will already be a statement of your own conclusion which will need to be defended with reasons. Any additional or further conclusion drawing in majors or minors will detract from the proof of the controlling idea. Therefore, when drawing a conclusion only do so if it is a conclusion which leads into the main support of the controlling idea. These conclusions will usually need to be made either in a final minor to a major or in the third major (or its minors) of the paragraph.

When organizing a reason paragraph always build up to the most important major reason (the third major).

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ICEBERG TOWING TO DESERT AREAS
(Student's Paper)

TS The idea of towing icebergs from polar regions of the world to desert areas for use as a water source will be tested this year. I Countries such as Saudi Arabia have shown a great interest in the idea of towing icebergs to their drought-plagued lands. A Saudi Arabia's Prince Mohammed Faisel has been instrumental in getting international study efforts underway through a group called "Icebergs For the Future." B Prince Mohammed Faisel has also sponsored an international conference for iceberg technology held in Ames, Iowa. II The tremendous abundance of water stored in the icebergs of the Antarctic could be of great use to the peoples of the desert areas of the world. A Eighty percent of the fresh water of the world lies stored in the icebergs of the Antarctic. B Tabular icebergs, the only icebergs suitable for towing, prove to be common in the Antarctic. III The technology in iceberg towing has advanced to the point now that the first test of the towing will be conducted in the spring of this year. A The constant watch of space satellites has provided the vital information of ocean current patterns so that a route could be planned for the first test. B The international organizations such as "Icebergs For the Future" have experimented with and tested the problems involved with towing icebergs and now have narrowed the problems of iceberg towing to a point where testing of the towing may be conducted. FS Towing icebergs from polar regions to desert areas, for use as a water source, could prove beneficial to the peoples of these areas.

Paragraphs of Illustration and Example

An illustration paragraph consists of a topic sentence and one "story" which supports the topic sentence. The anecdote or story used to support the topic sentence works as a single unit. No one sentence necessarily specifically supports the topic sentence, but the whole unit must support it. However, if a sentence does not contribute to the main purpose of the story, it should be omitted. An illustration usually tells a story or paints a picture.

Illustration Paragraph

Topic Sentence

x x x x x
x x x x x — This entire unit supports the topic sentence.
x x x x x

An example paragraph is structurally the same as paragraphs of reason and detail. Following the topic sentence are three major supports with two minor supports for each major. Each major must support the topic sentence in terms of the controlling idea. Each minor must support the major in terms of the controlling idea of the topic sentence. Example supports are just that; they are examples used to illustrate the topic sentence.

Example Paragraph

Topic Sentence

1st major
  1st minor
  2nd minor

2nd major
  1st minor
  2nd minor

3rd major
  1st minor
  2nd minor

THE BEAUTIFUL QUEBEC
(Illustration Paragraph Example)

Traveling to well-known Quebec during spring vacation of my eighth-grade year was an unforgettable experience for me. The morning after my class arrived in Quebec, my girlfriend and I set out to tour the city. Our first stop was at the Chateau Frontenac. When I entered the castle, the dazzling beauty of the halls and rooms was breathtaking. After we had seen all the sights of the Chateau, my friend and I continued on our journey by visiting the various gift and trade stores found on the streets of Quebec. After getting lost on the way back to the hotel to deposit our packages, we discovered an alley called "painters' row." Here young artists from around the old city come to display their works of art. When going through the alley after buying a painting, I realized that this whole business was a tourist trap; I figured this out when I saw my same painting in another artist's display. The next day being Easter Sunday, my friend and I traveled to the famous Cathedral Notre Dame for Mass. The sculptured features and hand carved walls expressed the beauty of this church. The last activity I participated in on my visit to Quebec was a ride on a ferry boat along the St. Lawrence River. When I boarded this boat, I was surprised to find that it still moved through the water by the use of paddle wheels. After three days of visiting the attractions of Quebec, I was sorry the trip had to end, because I was just becoming accustomed to the sights.

Paragraph of Combination

This paragraph allows a writer to utilize all three methods of support. A topic has the best explanation possible. Two methods of organization can be used to write an effective explanation. These are the "reason major" combination paragraph and the "block" combination paragraph.

The "reason major" combination paragraph has all reason majors and minors which can be any of the three types. Of course, each successive major is stronger and the third is the strongest.

Topic Sentence

I. Reason Major
   - A.
   - B. Detail, reason, or example minors

II. Reason Major
   - A.
   - B. Detail, reason, or example minors

III. Reason Major
   - A.
   - B. Detail, reason, example minors

Final Sentence

The "block" paragraph uses one form of support for the major and its minors. The order of support does not matter as long as the supports become stronger.

Topic Sentence

I. Reason Major
   - A.
   - B. Reason minors

II. Detail Major

A.
B. Detail minors

III. Example Major

A.
B. Example minors

Final Sentence

ADOLF HITLER'S MISTAKES
(Student's Paper)

TS Between 1941 and 1944 Nazi dictator, Adolf Hitler made certain military strategical mistakes which hindered the German war effort. D Because of several tactical errors, the dictator relinquished the possibility of total European dominance. As England was constantly pulverized to the brink of submission by bombs from the well-equipped and efficient Nazi war machine, Hitler suddenly turned eastward to attack the strong German ally, Russia. Resulting in over one million German soldiers dead, wounded, or captured, the Fifth Army, with supplies cut, was forced by Hitler to continue fighting the Russians in Stalingrad. R Upon experiencing great allied pressure on the defensive fronts, the "Führer" soon was forced into frenzied, wild withdrawals of troops. When the defeat of Italy resulted in the conversion of the country from an Axis power to German foe, Hitler quickly withdrew too many men too rapidly from the Italian peninsula. During the well-planned Normandy invasion, Hitler foolishly ordered the abandoning of the invincible heavy armor and the unnecessary mass evacuation of his soldiers on the western front. E Although the brave German forces gallantly fought the mounting oppressive allied attacks in the cold, dank, dismal forest regions of the Ardennes on the virtual doorstep of the declining fatherland, Adolf Hitler ordered the troops in vain to "fight to the last man" for the area in the Battle of the Bulge. Through impossible odds and consequently inducing the capture of the last defending army of the European axis power, the beaten ruler directed the German commander to counter-attack. Also producing destroyed forces nearby at Antwerp, Hitler commanded his troops to regroup together. FS Hence, Adolf Hitler's self-made strategical misfortunes became a problem to the German war effort during World War II.

THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE; THE SUPERNATURAL?
(Student's Paper)

TS Although explanations exist, no actual facts can be applied to the mysterious deaths that have occurred in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean known as the Bermuda Triangle. I(E) In many of the disappearances that have happened in the Triangle, no trace of the vehicle, rubbish, or bodies have been found. A On October 30, 1954, the military passenger plane, Navy super-constitution, carrying 142 people, went down into the ocean; the search crew of 200 planes and 30 vessels never found any sign of the plane's existence. B The 19,000 ton ship, Cyclops, with 309 persons aboard, vanished on January 8, 1918; no debris from the ship was ever discovered. III(D) Dr. Anton F. Brunn, Michael J. Nicoll, and E. G. B. Meade-Waldo offer the theory of sea monsters to explain the enigmatical deaths. A While cruising off the southwest coast of Africa, between the Cape of Good Hope and the island of St. Helena in February 1930, Dr. Brunn reported capturing a six-foot-long baby eel whose parents would have measured the estimated length of 30 to 50 feet. D On December 7, 1905, two zoologists, Nicoll and Meade-Waldo, stated that they saw a monster with a great turtle-like head and whose neck

was as thick as a man's body; the creature apparently rose between seven or eight feet out of the water and moved very slowly.
III(R)Perhaps the best way to account for the mishaps in this area is the effect of weather conditions, equipment failure, and human error. A In the Carribean-Atlantic area, thunderstorms and waterspouts often occur without warning, causing the pilots and navigators to face sudden catastrophe. B Often people venture out to the waters with a boat which is too small, without knowledge of the area, and with a lack of good seamanship. CS The deaths occurring in the Bermuda Triangle have been attributed to many theories, but none of them have been proven.

In conclusion, I would forewarn teachers that this form of writing is not "the end all or be all." It is one form of structure. I also believe that since I have been at the Ohio Writing Project I have gained new ideas that I will incorporate into my paragraph classes. I believe that it is important to have the students do some type of free writing each day, and I will spend at least ten to fifteen minutes having my students doing this.

Bay Village High School
Bay Village City Schools
Bay Village

Prewriting Activities in the Elementary

Ruth Ann Peacock

The most important elements in a successful school year are a teacher's planning and a relaxed atmosphere. I strive to create an atmosphere where students can relax and gain confidence. Phillip Lopate (1978) states that "The best single incentive to creative writing is a classroom atmosphere in which everyone knows he or she has permission to go off and write at any time in the day" (p. 148). We need to make the child feel self-absorbed, alone with his thoughts. Another researcher, William Irmscher, realizing the positive effect that a pleasant atmosphere has in building a writer's confidence, states that "the single most important factor that affects improvement in the composition class is the teacher student relationship" (1979, p. 49).

Creating trust is just as essential in elementary writing classes as in college. In teaching second grade I have found that the children are usually very excited about school and learning, but they have already begun to create negative attitudes toward writing. Although they can identify character, plot, and setting, they have not developed the skills to write fluently, to generate more than a simple sentence. To invite fluency, I have used a structured activity called "The Circle Story" adapted from Mary Jett-Simpson's "Writing Stories Using Model Structures: The Circle Story" (1981). This structure provides the plan and the organization that some children need in order to write creative stories. Britton (1970b) suggests that using preexisting structures allows children to extend "their writing resources by temporarily taking over somebody elses's, and in due course they begin to use some of these resources, . . .for their own [purposes]" (p. 38). This structure not only helps students write more freely, it builds their confidence and enhances their self-concepts. Such skills are not beyond first graders.

The circle story is a story structure that begins and closes at the same place, the main character's home. As the story unfolds, the main character leaves home to accomplish a goal, experiences a series of adventures, successfully accomplishes the mission, and returns home. In using the circle story technique, the teacher may select any number of books to read aloud to the children that follow such a circular story structure. Several books--"Millions of Cats" by Wanda Gag, "Rosie's Walk" by Pat Hutchins, "The Funny Little Woman" by Arlene Mosel, "Petronella" by Jay Williams--all have been suggested by Mary Jett-Simpson, and all have worked well with my students. After I have read a circle story to the children, I divide them into groups of six and provide them with a large sheet of paper on which I have drawn a large circle divided into six numbered sections. Then I provide crayons and pencils, allowing adequate time for them to discuss the main adventures in the story. The children first draw a house (the main character's home) at the top of the circle, the beginning and ending point of the illustrated story. The children then illustrate in each segment of the circle an adventure from the story that I have just read. The age of the group, maturity, language experiences, and skills mastered will determine how structured the teacher needs to make this activity. In some groups the children may be able to determine how many segments they will need in order to illustrate the adventures they wish to depict. This is a prewriting activity that requires listening skills, recall of facts, recall of sequence, and details of main events. After the story is illustrated the circle story makes an excellent display and an excellent source of information for discussion. The children will look to see what adventures were included by some groups and not by others. You'll hear such statements as: "Why did you leave out. . .? Why are yours not in the right order? Which scene do you like the best?

After the children have experienced success in illustrating, we construct a collaborative or group story using this same circle structure. We begin by drawing a large circle on the chalkboard. We then decide into how many segments we will divide our circle. I remind the children that each segment will require an adventure for our story. After having segmented our circle, we decide on the

main character. At that time, I ask a student to draw the main character's home at the top of our circle. The main character is decided upon before our home is drawn because a rabbit, as a main character, would need a different home than other types of characters. After the home is drawn, we take our main character on his first adventure (a child draws each adventure) and we continue this procedure until each segment has another adventure and finally the main character accomplishes his goal and returns home! I have questions displayed on charts that the children may refer to for help if they are having problems developing our story. Examples of these questions are:

1. Who or what is the main character?
   Why should she or he leave home?
   What does she or he want to accomplish?

2. What is the first adventure?

3. What is the second adventure?

4. What is the last adventure?
   How is the goal accomplished?
   How does the main character return home?

Each of the above questions would correspond to that numbered circle story segment. If more than four segments are used there would be more adventures included in the story.

After the class story is illustrated, individual children take turns telling the story using the illustrations to guide their thinking. This takes considerable time but it is necessary and important because it provides practice in building a story. We now have a spontaneous group composition that the group doubted they could do. They are pleased, have had lots of fun, and much needed confidence is mounting! The children have enjoyed this activity and they want to do it again!

After having illustrated the story that I read to them and after having completed the group story, the children are now permitted to choose groups, or they may work in pairs, to illustrate and to plan their own circle stories. I display and discuss the set of guide questions used earlier for discussion. I remind the children that they may use any number of segmented parts but each part will mean another adventure! After having illustrated their stories, they are told that it's time to try a story on their own. They are instructed to use their illustrated stories as a model structure for the story that they will write. The teacher's role now is to provide support, encouragement, freedom to try new ideas, and, again, adequate time.

Even though the circle story is structured, the response can be the students'; the structure will merely guide them as they write. Herbert Kohl (1975) says "The teacher can provide the framework for many written exercises, but the substance of the children's responses must be drawn from their life and imagination" (p. 157).

After the stories are completed, the child again needs the opportunity to share his story with his peers. During small group sharing the child is forcing himself to re-read his story, and in this small group re-reading, he will become aware of writing problems. This small group sharing serves as a peer group reshaping process. Prior to group reshaping, the teacher must insist on no "put downs"; only helpful constructive comments are permitted. The teacher must be careful not to stifle creativity by spending days forcing the student to reshape his or her writing. After small group sharing and reshaping, the child is eager to share his masterpiece of writing with the class. Lester Golub (1975) found in studying children in grades 3-6 that "[They] want to express their ideas in writing, they also like to express their thoughts in writing. Once the writing is done, they want to express themselves aloud with members of the class" (p. 71). I feel that group sharing

is extremely important to the child, and it is an activity that is sometimes forgotten or skipped because of our very busy schedules in elementary schools.

After children have met with success and have confidence in their abilities to write, I create an area in the classroom for a "Writing Center." This center provides flexibility in time for writing. A student may choose this area and, having become acquainted with a least one form, he or she can bring personal experiences and can write from what he or she knows. Making observations and exposure to something interesting often prompts children's writing.

This same circle structure or form can be used to develop from single to multiple events, to develop more descriptive writing, and to increase details. Children need experiences as well as encouragement in order to write. We have a multitude of experiences available that we can provide for the child through the use of literature; through sharing experiences, ideas, and feelings; and through music and pictures. Exploration of things outside the classroom, such as field trips to rivers, farms, supermarkets, or nature walks, or areas inside the school, such as cafeteria, office,furnace room, etc., can all provide the experiences needed for writing. So, too, can brainstorming, examination of objects, and other types of discussions. Classroom activities such as making popcorn, planting seeds and bulbs, etc. also provide valuable writing materials.

Research indicates, too, that books, pictures, records, and toys appear to be better stimuli for writing than a single, assigned title. Carol Fisher and Ann Terry (1977) state:

1. The basis for writing should be meaningful to the child.
2. The expectancy of success should be built into activity.
3. The writing activity should permit full exploration of the child's ideas by minimizing any developmental limitations.
4. The experience should extend the child's response to the surroundings by touching the senses, emotions, or imagination.
5. An ongoing, planned developmental program of instruction in composition should be a part of the language arts (p. 207).

Writing is a process not a product. Allow the child the time to think about what he wants to say, give hime the opportunity to observe the world around him, and provide a relaxed atmosphere, so the child can form in his mind some things he wants to say before he begins to write. After having completed a successful writing activity the student should have had fun, he should show pleasure in the finished writing, and he will probably want to share his treasured work!

Pleasant Local Elementary
Pleasant Local Schools
Marion

Making Writing Assignments: Some Considerations

James L. Creighton

Making good writing assignments is difficult. Good assignments will engage students' interest, allow them to demonstrate what they know about writing, and give them the opportunity to learn something. Clearly, not many teachers achieve these goals in assignment making. According to Applebee and others (1981), the typical paper assignment demands a paragraph that rehashes information and involves only "mechanical writing tasks" (pp. 78-80).

Several scholars and teachers offer remedies for the assignment problem. Applebee and others recommend that teachers in the content areas develop writing activities as "a tool for learning" (p. 81), that teachers learn more about the composing process in order to make better assignments, and that teachers "create contexts in which writing serves natural purposes "(p. 82). Larson (1982) suggests eleven major points teachers need to consider in making assignments; essentially, Larson urges teachers to think out assignments, to make them build upon one another, and to teach as the student does them. Lindemann (1982) recommends more prewriting to start students thinking. She indicates that teachers might ask themselves questions about their assignments, ranging from when the assignments should be due to what constitutes a successful response to them (pp. 208-209). Irmscher (1979), Farrell (1969), and Throckmorton (1980) also offer guidelines and checklists.

The use of such guidelines is valuable in planning assignments because it forces a teacher to examine step-by-step the elements which make the assignment satisfactory from the point of view of the student. Irmscher's five criteria are typical. They focus on the elements necessary for a good expository topic: 1) it should have "a purpose"; 2) it should be "meaningful within the student's experience"; 3) it should "prefer specific and immediate situations to abstract and theoretical ones"; 4) it should be "within a student's grasp"; and 5) it should "encourage a student to write." Irmscher even suggests a "nutty" assignment that encourages "a special kind of invention or humor." He also gives a variety of model topics that follow his own guidelines (pp. 69-77). Farrell encourages composition assignments which "stimulate students to role play," assignments related to self, audience, and selection (pp. 429-430). Throckmorton's checklist offers a quick means of measuring the worth of a topic: a good assignment will supposedly satisfy four of her five categories. Throckmorton claims a good assignment should be appropriate, stimulating, instructive, purposeful, and measurable (p. 58). Whatever their guidelines, all these writers agree that more thoughtfully wrought assignments are needed to produce better student responses.

Fort Frye High School
Fort Frye Local Schools
Beverly

Come Back, Shane! The Use of Film to Motivate Writing

Marcia L. Ramsey

I am always searching for new ways to bring variety, enrichment, and excitement into my junior high language arts classes. I had always thought that it would be ideal to use Hollywood-produced feature films for teaching the language arts, but I didn't think our school budget would ever allow such extravagance until I discovered the Southern Ohio Feature Film Center, which is part of the Montgomery County Schools and which provides movies at a price even my district can afford. After I solved the problem of cost, I had to learn how to use the films.

My first use of feature films as teaching aids took the form of film reviews, which consisted of comments on characters, setting, plot, and theme. My students needed little instruction since they were already familiar with book reports. Little by little I learned to take advantage of the unique elements of film, its visual imagery and sensory activity.

Shane was the first film the students selected for writing projects. I considered it an excellent choice since one of my most vivid memories is of sitting in a dark theater at the age of twelve crying with Brandon DeWilde (Joey) as he called, "Come back, Shane!" Joey and I watched Shane ride away out of the valley and out of our lives, probably forever. I could have written volumes about Shane if only someone had asked me to do so.

As I watched the film with my students, I was again pulled into the story. The old magic was still there and I watched as it wove its spell around my students. When the film ended, I gave the following writing assignment choices.

1. Write a film review discussing the characters, setting, plot, and theme.
2. Write about the hints the film gave you that Shane was a gunfighter.
3. Write about the relationship of Shane and Chris Calloway. Did it change?
4. Compare and contrast Shane and Jack Wilson as gunfighters.
5. Based on the film, write a description of life in Wyoming in the 1870s.

The results were unprecedented for my students. They came out of their "I-don't-know-what-to-write" shells and wrote. An eighth grader who didn't like to write and thought it was a real chore wrote for assignment one:

> Shane was the main man. He was a quiet man but he was a gunfighter. Joe Starret was a farmer who was trying to keep the other farmers in the valley together. Marian was Joe's loyal and loving wife. Joey was their little boy. Rufe Riker was a rancher who wanted the homesteaders to leave. Chris Calloway was a bully and Wilson was a gunfighter out to kill Shane. Other homesteaders included Torie, Axel Shipstaad, the Lewises, and the Wrights. Torie was a fool. He went after Wilson and Wilson shot him.
>
> This story took place in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains in Wyoming in the late 1800's.
>
> The farmers and the ranchers were fighting over use of the land. Shane came to help the farmers. The first time he went to town, the cowboys made fun of him. He did not fight back because Starret had told him to stay out of trouble. That night, the farmers called Shane a coward. The next day, Shane went to town and beat up all of the men who had made fun of him.

On the Fourth of July, the farmers had a dance and picnic. Torie bragged about how he wasn't afraid to go to town by himself. Torie went to town the next day and Jack Wilson killed him.

The Lewises were going to leave the valley because of Torie's death, but Riker's men set fire to their house while everyone was at Torie's funeral and that made Mr. Lewis mad. The other farmers said they would help him rebuild his house, so he stayed.

After that, Shane went to town and killed Riker and his men. They tried to kill Shane but he won.

Courage, survival, and friendship were the themes in this film. The strongest part of the story was when Shane and Joe beat up Riker's men. The weakest part was when Shane worked on Starret's farm.

I liked this movie. It was like no other western I have ever seen.

An average eighth-grade student wrote for assignment four:

Jack Wilson and Shane had a lot of differences between them. They dressed differently. Shane had tan clothes made of skins; Jack Wilson had black western clothes and a vest.

Jack looked like a gunfighter in every way. Shane did not look the way you would think a gunfighter should look. Shane had blonde hair and a pleasant face. Jack had black hair and a mean look. Even his horse looked mean and walked mean.

Shane carried only one gun; Jack Wilson carried two. Joey asked Shane how many guns a man should carry, and Shane told him it didn't matter how many guns a man carried. What counted was who operated them.

Shane and Jack were alike in some ways. They were both quiet. They both stood back and observed. They didn't try to prove they were men. They knew they were.

Our second film project was based on the film Tora, Tora, Tora. The only instruction given on this film was that the students were to write about a part of the film that was especially vivid or had special meaning for them.

A seventh-grade learning disabilities student with a severe speech impediment wrote:

One of the Japanese planes crashed into a hangar. When our new B-17's were coming in, the Japanese attacked them. The B-17's didn't have any ammunition and some of them had to crash land. One of them landed with one front wheel.

An American general had all of the American fighters lined up close together. It was easy for the Japanese to blow them up.

A straight A seventh grader and three time winner of the Daughters of the American Revolution essay contest wrote:

There were many mistakes committed by the United States. Information coming in about the planned attack was ignored by the Americans. A general figured out that the Japanese would probably attack on a weekend at dawn which is just what they did. This information was ignored because Japan was signing a peace treaty and the American statesmen and most of the military men thought the Japanese wouldn't attack us.

Another general was afraid that saboteurs would blow up the fighter planes during the night, so he ordered the aircraft to be lined up for protection. This was a mistake because the Japanese were able to bomb the planes in a straight line.

Information came in that the Japanese were coming. A

submarine was sighted near the harbor. An American commander told the soldier who sighted it that it was probably only a false alarm and that they would need confirmation.

Just before the attack, a big squadron of aircraft was spotted on radar, but the radar was new. The operators thought the planes were aircraft coming back from training.

After the attack, the Japanese found out that the attack was fifty minutes before Japan declared war on the United States. This made the people of the United States very angry and Japan's leaders knew they had made a mistake.

An average seventh-grade student whose family owns and operates a dairy farm in a national forest wrote:

> The army had a radar outfit. The men who brought the radar in had a perfect place to put it, on the point of a mountain. The Forestry Department wouldn't let them put it there because they said the radar would disturb the wildlife. The army finally found another place to set it up, but it wasn't as good a place.
>
> They set everything up and left two boys there to run it. The boys asked how they were supposed to call if they got something on the radar. The other soldiers told them there was a gas station about one mile down the road and that they should go down there and call in.
>
> The boys on the radar didn't know how to operate it. When they got a telephone later, they called in when they thought they had something. The officer told them it was probably just a mistake. It was Japanese aircraft coming in to attack on December 7, 1941.

Assignments can be combined with diary writing or journal keeping assignments. After showing Johnny Tremain, I asked students either to (1) write a diary entry or entries for a film character or (2) write a diary entry or entries for an invented character who might have lived during the period immediately before, during, or after the Revolutionary War.

A seventh-grade, above-average student wrote the following diary entries about the events surrounding the Boston Massacre.

> March 4, 1770
>
> Dear Diary,
>
> I am getting scared. The people of this town are getting restless. They don't like the idea of the British troops being stationed in our town. My father thinks the people are silly, but my brother is angry. Father and he are always arguing about whether they will or will not fight the British. My father says he won't. My brother says he will. I hope neither of them do. I hope it doesn't even happen.
>
> March 5, 1770
>
> Dear Diary,
>
> My brother says he will go with the mob today. Dad says that he won't allow him to.
>
> My brother went anyway. We watched him from the window. The mob taunted the soliders. They threw things at the soldiers. My father said that the people were crazy to do such a thing. There were about 600 people out there. Finally the soldiers would take no more. They shot into the crowd! Why did this have to happen? I wish I knew.
>
> March 6, 1770
>
> Dear Diary,
>
> We didn't find out until today that my brother was shot in

the riot. He may lose his leg. Three people killed and eight were wounded. No one knows what to do. Everyone is just running around trying to help but not being able to. Mother has been crying all day.

Today is my birthday. What a way to celebrate. No one knows what will happen now.

March 7, 1770

Dear Diary,

Everything is getting back into a little bit of order now. There was a funeral for three people who were killed. Almost everyone went.

My father is mad at himself because my brother was wounded. He thinks he could have kept him from going out with the mob, but he couldn't have. When my brother gets his mind on something, he won't change it.

March 8, 1770

Dear Diary,

We have good news! My brother isn't going to lose his leg. We found out after the doctor examined him this morning.

I should be happy, but it's hard. My friend says that she can't be friends with me anymore since my brother sided with the mob. Her father was against the mob and her family cannot associate with my family anymore. It doesn't make sense. I really like her a lot. She says she still wants to be friends. I hope we can be.

March 9, 1770

Dear Diary,

I am in a much better mood today. My family is still rejoicing the fact that my brother will not be a cripple.

My friend came by today. She says that maybe we can be friends after this business about the mob is over. Maybe things will work out.

There may be a war, though. If there is, I hope we win. I think we deserve our freedom.

Keeping in mind that any literary technique used to stimulate writing can also be used with film, my students have many activities left to explore.

1. An invented character may be written into a film.
2. A film character may be written into another situation or story.
3. A monologue may be written for a film character or an invented character.
4. Invented dialogue may be written between film characters or an invented character and a film character.
5. Correspondence may be written between film characters or a film character and an invented character.
6. A diary may be written for a film character or an invented character.
7. A journal may be written for a film character or an invented character.
8. The ending may be changed or extended.
9. The beginning may be changed.
10. Students may write about what happened before the film action was

picked up or what happened after the film ended.

11. The story itself may be rewritten.

12. Script writing may be done. Narration may be included.

13. A poem may be written about a scene or the film.

In addition to the literary aspects of film, we also have background music, sound effects, scenery, directing, acting, camera angles, and lighting to explore. Some activities in these areas would be:

1. Was the background music used to create mood or just to make noise? If it was used to create mood, how was this done? Did it work for you? If you could change it, how would you do it?

2. What sound effects, if any, were used in the film? Were they part of what you expected in the scene or were they isolated from the rest of the scene? Did they fit the action? Did they add to or take away from the film? How? If you could change any of the effects, what would you do?

3. Was the scenery an integral part of the story or was it just background for the story? Did it help to set the mood or was it just there? Would the effect of the story be different with different scenery? Was the scenery used with sound effects or in isolation? Does the scenery work for or against the film? How? If you could change it how would you do it?

4. How did the director set up a particular scene? Where did he place the actors and the props? How did the action flow? If you were the director, how would you change the scene?

5. How did one or two of the actors portray their characters? What facial expressions did they use? What body language did they use? Did it work for you? If not, was it overplayed or underplayed? What could the actor have done to make the character what you think he should be? If you were the actor, how would you play the part?

6. What camera angles were used in a particular scene? What was the focus of the shot? How would you shoot the scene if you could do it over? What would your focus be?

7. How was lighting used? Did it add to the film or was it just there? If it added to the film, how did it do so? If you could change the lighting, how would you do it?

These writing activities may be used with modifications through all grade levels. Simplification will be necessary for the primary and intermediate grades. High school teachers may go deeper into these activities, exploring the subtleties of the film.

Research indicates that for every book the average high school student reads he sees 20 films. Students are a reservoir of film experiences. They already know how to get involved in film. They have done it many times and they can't wait to share their thoughts and feelings about films. Invite Shane, Moby Dick, or Ivanhoe into your classroom and watch the action.

Lawrence Elementary School
Frontier Local Schools
Marietta

Reasons, Decisions, and Writing

Helene Dunigan

As a student in a series of courses taught at Ohio State by professors Gerald Reagan (Education) and Bernard Rosen (Philosophy), I learned "Moral Negotiation," a set of skills based on rules of logic by which one can rationally make moral decisions. As a composition teacher, I discovered the same rational approach is useful in making not only moral but many other kinds of decisions, and provides an almost sure-fire means to teach one kind of composition--persuasion--in which reason-giving is essential.

The conditional statement provides the logical base for moral negotiation: If (this) then (that). The "if" clause is called the antecedent, the "then" clause the consequent. The antecedent lists reasons for the consequent. It is important to remember that the reasons are not necessarily true statements (Rosen, 1980, p. 249). Here are two examples of conditional statements from Rosen (1981):

> If slavery in the U.S. in the 18th and early 19th centuries consists of
> 1. taking care of child-like creatures who otherwise would harm themselves and
> 2. providing gainful employment for those who otherwise would be unable to find any and
> 3. providing a useful culture which would not be adopted by the slaves otherwise,
>
> Then slavery in the U.S. in the 18th and early 19th centuries is morally justified.

Or:

> If slavery in the U.S. in the 18th and early 19th centuries consists of
> 1'. forcing human beings to work at jobs not of their own choosing, although they are capable of choosing otherwise and for themselves and
> 2'. preventing some persons from seeking gainful employment which suits them and
> 3'. forcing a culture on those who have a useful culture of their own,
>
> Then slavery in the U.S. in the 18th and 19th centuries is not morally justified.

After you list the reasons, the next step in the system is to reach conditional agreement, which requires that, if you accept the reasons listed in the antecedent as true, then the consequent must follow. Conditional agreement does not require judging the individual reasons in the antecedents; that judging comes later (Rosen, 1981). To evaluate the reasons in each antecedent, you must decide if each is a good reason. For example, reason #2 of the slavery argument suggests that slavery provides gainful employment for people who otherwise could not find jobs. Historical examination of the eighteenth to twentieth centuries proves that with training blacks can, indeed, do the same work as whites. Thus, reason #2 is unacceptable as support for the consequent that "slavery . . . is morally justified." On the other hand, reason #3' of the slavery argument suggests that slavery forces a culture on those who already have a useful culture of their own. Again, a look at

history shows that eighteenth-century blacks did have their own viable economic, educational, and social structures which were destroyed or replaced by white culture. Thus, reason #3' supports the consequent that "slavery . . . is not morally justified."

Each part of each antecedent is examined in turn. Those participating in the discussion may determine that some reasons are irrelevant. For example, "People with brown skin can work in the sun longer and more easily than people with fair skin" may or may not be true; however, participants may judge the statement irrelevant to whether or not slavery is morally justified, and may strike out the reason. Some reasons may be identified as personal preferences, such as "I don't like people with dark curly hair," and once identified as such may be discounted.

Once conditional agreement is reached and the reasons in each antecedent evaluated, the next step might be unconditional agreement, in which participants agree that either one or the other consequent is the correct judgment--"slavery is morally justified," or "slavery is not morally justified." However, unconditional agreement is not essential. The arguments for both sides of a dilemma are there and available for use in decision making, should a decision be desired.

The system works. It provides a practical method for making decisions and also provides a simple technique to teach persuasive writing. Assume, for instance, that you want students to write a persuasive paper based on Prosper Merimee's short story "Mateo Falcone." In the story, Falcone murders his only son, Fortunato, because Fortunato, against the code of his people, betrays to a patrol the hiding place of an escaped outlaw. After using the system to list reasons for the consequent: "If . . . then Mateo Falcone should kill Fortunato" and "If . . . then Mateo Falcone should not kill Fortunato," have the students decide whether or not Mateo ought to have killed Fortunato, choose the two or three reasons they think best support their opinion, and write a paper using the reasons. What follows is part of a paragraph that might result from this assignment:

> Mateo Falcone should not have murdered his son Fortunato just because the boy betrayed the hidden outlaw, Sanpiero. First, Mateo views betrayal as a despicable sin, yet in killing his son, Mateo is a traitor too. Mateo betrays the natural bond between father and son, and betrays as well the intense love and pride he has in the boy.

In the story are other controversial issues, stimulants for discussion and writing, such as whether or not Fortunato's mother should have intervened to prevent the boy's death. You may require that students' reasons and evidence come only from the reading, or you may allow other relevant reasons.

Material for discussion and writing is available everywhere. Literature is a gold mine, as are issues in current events, social studies, and science. Should an imprisoned hunger striker be allowed to die? Should compulsory sterilization of the mentally retarded and/or mentally ill be legalized? Should experiments in genetic engineering continue? Should creationism, as an alternative to evolution, be taught in the public schools? The community in which the students live is a source: "If . . . then the residential zoning law should/should not be changed." The school itself is another source: "If . . . then students ought/ought not to be suspended from school for smoking." And the student himself is yet another source: "If . . . then I should/should not spend my savings for a car."

Certain problems related to word meaning may arise when you use this system to teach decision making and persuasive writing. An example of such a problem is the word right, a word whose meaning depends on its context. It can mean "correct," "a direction," or "an obligation."

Other words may require clarification. For example, evaluative words such as good, bad, and evil; or evaluative and descriptive words like steal and murder. Even modal auxiliaries like should can cause problems. Does it mean morally obligated, advisable, or simply likely?

Some knowledge of basic logic and ethics will help. Your knowledge of fallacies in logic, about the various appeals used in propaganda, and about various ethical theories, such as utilitarianism (what is best for the greatest number is right) and egoism (what is best for me is right), will help you "see through" and clarify your students' reasons.

Other things you will learn by doing. For example, I learned quickly to narrow the consequent or "then" part of the conditional statement. My students read and discussed a Newsweek article (August 31, 1981, p. 35) about rock groups in England, whose raucous, obscene, and anti-establishment songs caused riots wherever the groups performed. Because violence seemed to follow in the wake of such groups, police banned the rock concerts, stores refused to sell the records, and Decca stopped publishing the most recent album. I intended to use this article for a discussion of whether or not censorship is morally permissible. In one class, the conditional statements were: "If . . . then censorship is morally permissible" and "If . . . then censorship is not morally permissible." Students began giving reasons--all sorts of reasons--for both conditional statements. However, the reasons were why they should, or should not, be permitted to view certain films, drink beer, and read Playboy, all relevant to a discussion of censorship but irrelevant to the violence that resulted from the rock concerts in England. In another class, the conditional statements were much more specific: "If . . . then the police should ban the concerts" and "If . . . then the police should not ban the concerts." In the later class, students concentrated their attention on the cause for this particular censorship and gave more specific reasons:

> If the concerts are the major cause of the riots and
> people are injured during the riots and
> property is destroyed and
> the country is already in an upheaval that is made worse by the riots,
> Then the police should ban the concerts.

And:

> If the government can prevent a recurrence of violence in some other way and
> no one is forced to listen to the music and
> banning the concerts offends the majority of the population,
> Then the police should not ban the concerts.

The reasons these students gave created a lively discussion. "How many people were hurt?" "Was anyone killed?" "How serious was the property damage?" "Britain's already in a mess because of the English-Irish conflict. Were the concerts really the cause of the riots?" The article answered some of the questions; others took research to answer. Some we could merely speculate on: "Can the government prevent a recurrence of violence in some other way, perhaps by a milder form of censorship such as limiting ticket sales, limiting the length of the concerts, or providing more police?" Partly because the topic was more specific, the students in the later class gave more thoughtful reasons for their opinions and wrote more interesting and persuasive paragraphs than did students in the earlier class.

With practice, the method is easy to use. Almost any issue will do, providing it has two possible outcomes. The method provides students with a valuable means for making decisions, moral or practical, serious or simple. It also provides a formula for writing persuasively. The early and in-class student writings sound similar, to be sure. But as students become more sophisticated using the method, they begin varying the introductions, the

sentence length, and the organization of the piece. Some occasionally provide a new and sound reason, one not discussed in class, for their side of the argument. Then they use the technique for out-of-class assignments, developing their own conditional statements and turning them into persuasive papers.

An added advantage to this method is that it provides a relatively calm atmosphere for discussing emotion-laden topics. When participants know they can give reasons and make their own decisions after all, some of the tension of the controversy relaxes. In brief, it can help students see their way through difficult decisions in a rational way.

Bloom-Carroll High School
Bloom-Carroll Local Schools
Carroll

Teaching Audience Through Children's Books

Phyllis L. Bishop

Like Elbow (1973), I believe that audience reactions are good feedback for writers. So, a few years ago, I decided to search for a way to provide my students with a larger audience than simply me. Of the ways I investigated, the writing of children's books seemed the most promising, partly because it provided immediate feedback from a readily available audience, and partly because an elementary school audience didn't threaten my students. It didn't hurt that the administration willingly provided a field trip to the elementary school.

After I decided to have my students write children's books, I discussed with them what a six-year-old audience would expect, what time of year the books were being done, and whether the books were to be read to the children or by the children. After the discussions, we established criteria as to what constituted good children's books (see Colby, 1967). We decided that children's books need pretty much what all books need--central themes, appeal, originality, plot development, character motivation, and a sense of humor. In addition, we decided--following Colby--that children's books should be well illustrated and sturdy.

Before we began writing, we looked at published children's books, and I gave a slide presentation on ways of illustrating the books. I was especially interested in showing students that they did not have to be artists to illustrate a children's book. I encouraged them to be creative and use various modes of illustration.

Putting together a good children's book produced problems in production as well as in writing. Students had to decide how large to make the pages, what print to use, and how to prepare a title page and front cover. The logistics seemed insurmountable. But I found that Charlotte Huck was correct, that "Nothing motivates children to write more than the opportunity to create a book, to bind it, and illustrate it" (1976, p. 686).

At first the writing and production were accomplished in groups. I provided advice when asked, and acted as a referee where disagreements became a problem. Usually disagreements involved the group's concepts of six-year-olds. After the groups produced cooperative efforts, each student created a children's book. This was completed outside of class and my only role was in assistance with whatever problems developed.

Close to either Thanksgiving or Easter, I take my students to the elementary school to read their books to the first graders. Their apprehension is always readily apparent. They worry about whether they have reached their audience. The children, of course, provide an instant feedback and success or failure is quickly apparent from audience reaction.

I see no reason why this method of creating for a different audience cannot be used at any grade level. In fact, I have used it with below-average students and have seen it successfully used to teach audience at lower grade levels. My students like it, and so do the first graders. Try it, your students will like it, too.

Loveland Hurst High School
Loveland City Schools
Loveland

Using Advertising to Teach Composition

Stephen Gibson

A few years ago, I ran across a letter from a high school English teacher who tried to teach kids new writing skills, building upon what they already knew. She wrote, I remember, that she heard many of her colleagues complain daily about the quality of student writing, attributing the decline to young people's interest in watching movies and TV rather than in reading and writing. In contrast to her colleagues, she tried to exploit that student interest in any way she could. How right she was. After all, what are our students more expert in than the mass media? I felt that surely a study of the language and tactics of the mass media would be a valuable addition to any high school English program.

So I decided to develop a composition program based on the printed media which would help me foster, teach, and polish composition skills. Wherever I turned--to magazines, newspapers, journals, or comic books--advertising kept recommending itself to me. In no other medium is a knowledge of audience and tone so important. Ad writers must make average people think they are special because they smoke Camels or overworked housewives think it's important that dish soap can be whipped up into stiff peaks.

To begin with, you can use ads to teach about the nuances of language. The following, for instance, are some common terms used in ads. Can you define them or explain the differences among them? Assume they are being used in relation to a tape deck that is on sale for $149.95.

List Price--$199.95	Was $199.95
Regularly $199.95	Special purchase
Originally $199.95	Clearance
Below manufacturer's cost	As is
Comparable value--$199.95	Reduced price

If it were clothes you were going to buy instead of a tape deck, you might need to know these two terms, too:

Irregulars
Seconds

After discussing the terms in class, you might have the students write a radio, TV, or magazine ad using some of the terms effectively, or write a dialogue between themselves and the manager of the stereo shop that used one of the terms in its ads. You could also have the students find such terms in ads themselves. Klein (1971) has other such lists. Studying ads in this way can show students the importance of keeping the audience centermost in their minds as they write. Ads must evoke some response from the audience.

One of the best assignments I have made with ads asked students to verify advertising claims by writing to the involved companies. One student discovered that ads aren't always what they seem. A tire company revealed to her that their film of a truck driving over machetes was stopped well before the tires all went flat. The students learned the importance of a few words--"details upon request." And they got to reply to the company again after they learned the details.

Ad copy can teach tone, audience, syntax, or other grammatical and rhetorical devices. And I'm not very worried about those ads filled with bad grammar, coined words, fragments, repetitions, or vacuousness. If the ad works, it is worth studying. Kehl (1975) states that advertising rhetoric can be used to teach just about every conceivable writing skill one would want to cover in a year. You can use ads to teach propaganda techniques and

logic. Ads thrive on glittering generalities and testimonials. Witness the ad campaign of a large, patent medicine firm which has for its spokesperson an actor who has spent the last fifteen years playing a doctor on a television soap opera. The carry-over from his continuing television role is so storng that he then becomes an acceptable authority to speak about pain relievers.

Ads can be starting points for work with identification, definition, or analysis. Calvert Whiskey, for instance, asks us to define a "soft whiskey." Even Playboy would like our help in answering the question, "What sort of a man reads Playboy?" You can compare two similar products advertised in the same publication. What are the differences between Volkswagen ads and similar ads for Buicks or Cadillacs? How do these differences relate to audience?

Advertising provides the classroom teacher with numerous opportunities to teach about language. Advertising copy provides logical and well-known examples to the students, who may then copy, improve, criticize, analyze, and respond to them--learning the fundamentals of composition while receiving some good object lessons in the power that words have in their lives.

Patrick Henry High School
Patrick Henry Local Schools
Hamler

Using the Language Experience Approach for Writing and Reading Poetry in the First Grade Classroom

Norma Newell

Introducing young children to reading and writing through the language experience approach can be an exciting adventure in language. Until this school year, I'd used poetry infrequently with the pupils in my first grade classroom. Yes, my previous classes had listened to several poems, they had copied some from the chalkboard for writing practice, and they had memorized a few. The poems I selected were usually associated with the season, the weather, or a holiday. In looking back, I believe this approach was not very creative or very interesting for the pupils. It did not encourage their participation through language activities. Most of all, it did not encourage them to read and write poetry.

However, this past year has been different. For one thing, I have steadily leaned more towards the language experience approach for teaching beginning reading and writing.

Concerning this approach, Hall (1976) states that the cornerstones of language experience learning are language and experiences and the interrelatedness of the two. The interrelationships are the key to this approach, I believe. Britton (1970b)indicates that it is impossible to consider writing as something separated from the whole foundation of the individual's language ability. This foundation, according to Britton, rests on activities at the spoken level. He states that writing and talking and doing must go on in close relationship, and talking and doing provide the essential foundation. Hall quotes Loban in stating that "Through experience and through language we learn. Experience needs language to give it form. Language needs experience to give it content" (1976, p. 1). These ideas seem to summarize the language experience approach to reading, writing, and speaking and the need to integrate the various curriculum areas for the pupils in the primary grades.

Research literature indicates that no one reading or writing method is best. Results of the National First Grade Studies, as reported by Hall (1976), indicate that while no one method is superior, an eclectic approach may be best. This study seems to imply that the teacher, not the method, is the best indicator of a method. Dykstra, as reported by Hall, notes that: "There is evidence that a writing component is an effective addition to a primary reading program" (1976, p. 13). The language experience approach method does incorporate this component in a language program.

Another difference I observed this year involved what Irmscher (1979) calls the "chemistry" of teaching. I realized after only a few weeks that a close relationship had begun to develop between the children and me. In part I believe this may have been due to the combination of the personalities of the children and in part to the language experience method of teaching. They shared their experiences and ideas; I responded by accepting these with sincere appreciation and enthusiasm.

Early in the school year I became aware of a third difference. Previously I had found that most children entering first grade have learned only a few nursery rhymes. However, almost every child in this class possessed a rich background of these rhymes. They enjoyed saying these aloud during story-time, while we were changing activities, while relaxing or just cleaning up the room. Considering this background and being aware of some of the

possibilities involved with using their language and experiences, I began selecting poems to integrate into every area of the curriculum. I selected easy poems for them to read and copy and then re-read from the chalkboard and their papers. They took them home and read them again, sometimes several times, to their families. The parents were cooperative and encouraged their reading the hand-copied poems at home. Some were displayed in favorite places throughout their homes, I was told.

Often during the first few weeks of school and continuing throughout the year I copied a poem onto a chart. After reading this several times, we'd select specific words for use in other reading and writing activities. Later we mounted poems in attractive displays on bulletin boards in the hall. The children enjoyed illustrating their poems through various art media.

Pointing to the words and reading these poems was one of their favorite activities. Sometimes we would play a "Can You Find It?" game in which one pupil would call out a word contained in the poem and another pupil would touch the correct word. Usually I made a copy of each poem for each child. Usually they illustrated these individually; but always they took them home again to read. I recall how quickly they learned many sight words--interesting nouns, adjectives, and verbs. These activities involved writing, talking, and doing in close relationship that Britton suggests is highly important.

Often a child would ask to have a copy of a particular word from the poem for his individual word collection. In using ideas from Veatch and others (1973), I have found that pupils do learn to read and write words which they want to read and write. Seldom does a child forget words such as Darth Vader, Grandma, rollerskates, or dinosaur. The children enjoyed sharing "their" words; they took delight in teaching one of their words to another classmate. Thus the word card collections grew, while their reading and writing vocabularies grew.

Beginning with the first week of school, the children dictated numerous types of "stories" which they transcribed onto the chalkboard or chartpaper. Later I copied these into individual booklets for reading and illustrating, always including a title, illustrator, and author. These books became the possessions of the children; all had their own copies, and extra copies were continually added to the classroom library.

Also from the first week of the year, the pupils wrote independently, beginning with only a few letters or a word and picture. By the end of the first semester, most of the pupils were writing several sentences at a sitting in response to their experiences in and outside the classroom. Then, at about this time, I started them on daily journal writing.

Throughout the entire year, I read the children poems and stories daily, while they continued reading, copying, saying, and sharing new and favorite poems. They particularly enjoyed books that contained rhymed verses in the texts; then they would participate in the reading. They also enjoyed hearing their favorites many times over. In continuing to read stories and poems to the children at storytime and at various other times as these were integrated into the curriculum, I soon found that they were developing favorite poets, like Ciardi, Fisher, Kuskin, McCord, and Silverstein.

An awareness of what kinds of poetry young children like is helpful in selecting poems to share with students. In one study, Fisher and Natarella (1979) found that pupils in grades one through three prefer the narrative form; they prefer poems that rhyme and ones that contain a definite meter. The study also indicated that pupils like humorous poems and poems about children and animals.

One of my goals as a teacher is to extend and enrich the children's language with activities and experiences, and poetry provides an excellent vehicle. Through hearing, seeing, and participating in activities which

include a variety of forms and a variety of content, the children will be able to respond in their oral and written language in ways that reflect this diversity. Moffett (1976) indicates that the best teaching strategy is to extend language learning as much as possible from what the pupils already know and can do.

It was about semester time when my group wrote their first group poem. I had read several poems about snow to the children. They had copied and illustrated one which they especially enjoyed, "Snow," by Aldis. Later in the day we discussed what the snow, which they had happily romped in during recess, was like to them. The discussion describing their snow experience was lively and continued for several minutes. I sensed that the time was just right for their first group poem.

In beginning the collaborative poem, I listed on the chalkboard all their responses to "snow is like _____." I encouraged them to compare the snow to something they could see, something they did easily--and with enthusiasm. They volunteered many ideas; I accepted all of them. With only minor shaping by me and with their dictated language in full view, what resulted was a poem, indeed. They were so proud! Needless to say, I was also.

Snow

Snow looks like a
Big fluffy white blanket
A very long white sidewalk
A tiny white ball
And a thin white paper.

Snow looks like a hairy white beard
A puffy white cloud
A curly white sheep
And a soft furry rabbit.

Snow looks like a big poodle dog
A soft furry cat
A big scary white ghost
And a big fat snowman.

Lopate (1978) suggests that the collaborative composition is midway between discussion and solitary writing. He further asserts that the "pride children feel at seeing their classmates and themselves pull off a successful collaborative poem is the exultation of being part of a winning team and is of an entirely different order from the inward satisfaction gained by lone authorship" (Lopate, 1978, p. 137). I agree with Lopate in that this poem and others that followed did serve as a visual model. First on the board and later in their personal copies, they could see as well as read and hear the composition they had composed. Perhaps this experience and their previous experiences with poems in the classroom provided the pupils with what Applebee (1977) referred to as a sense of story, or in this case, a sense of poetry. I believe that the pupils learned, through actual participation, a great deal about poetry.

I made copies of the first poem for each pupil to take home that afternoon. Then, I left a few of the extras in the room, one mounted beside the door with a chalk drawing to illustrate it, one displayed on a closet door, two or three attached to construction paper and added to the classroom library. If possible, I always display their work at child's-eye level or below, or in places where children often stand or walk by, such as the water fountain, the restroom door, or just outside the classroom. Any place in which the children may pause long enough to read the writing or observe the drawing is a good place for a display.

As a way of encouraging children to experiment with poetry, Hennings and Grant (1981) state that a teacher can have children create images, sounds,

and visual elements without expecting them to produce fully crystallized poems. In pre-poetry writing sessions, these authors suggest that children "toy" with words, word pairs, phrases, and clauses. At that time, according to Hennings and Grant, their only task is to play with the sound of words, to concoct visual patterns out of words and spaces, and to play with the images that may express their ideas, emotions, and experiences. Word play experiences, I have found, are some of the most productive activities to encourage the child to experiment with and use words creatively. A variety of these activities may be done in small groups or with the entire class. Developing out of a word play activity, one of the most useful and creative ones I have tried involves word cards, on which they write words or phrases to be manipulated to various positions, eliminating the need to erase or to begin again. This activity works well with small group, the entire class, or individual writing. I have used this technique with first graders in writing cinquains and free verse poems.

Mom
Nice, cuddly
Works, reads, cooks
She is very sweet
Wonderful

(by Debra)

Dad
Fuzzy beard
Works, fixes, plants
He is very nice
Handsome

(by Asress)

The Wind

The wind pulls me up
The wind pulls me down
The wind pulls me
Around and everywhere
The wind pulls me here
The wind pulls me there
The wind pulls me left
The wind pulls me right
The wind pulls me
Everywhere

(class poem)

By physically moving the words about, I provided immediate and visual feedback to the child. Instead of trying to determine what the words or phrases may be like in different positions, the children could manipulate them and know.

Koch (1970) has indicated that rhyme is wonderful, but children generally are not able to use it skillfully enough to make good poetry. He says that it gets in their way. But, repetition is a device that I have found to be quite satisfying to the children. They seem to sense that this repeating of words or phrases in some way creates or sets up a pattern or rhythm, one of the elements that they like in poetry.

Kuskin (in Burrows, 1979) seems to agree with Koch about rhyming, but she notes that the poetry children write themselves and the poetry adults write for children are distinctly different, because children love the sound and swing of rhyme. When children write, she indicates, she tries to discourage them from rhyming, because rhyme freezes all the originality they have.

Although rhyming is an element which does not seem to encourage poetic expression and communication in young children, I have learned that other elements produce excellent results. For instance, compositions with comparisons, dreams, and wishes, free verse, acrostics, cinquain, terquain, diamante, couplets, and concrete poems are forms that young children may successfully and imaginatively employ in writing poetry. The children in my classroom have used several of these forms to produce poetry which has delighted them, their parents, other children, and me.

More Of It

A bike is like a Big Wheel
Except there is more of it.
An airplane is like a bird
Except there is more of it.
The "q" is like the "a"
Except there is more of it.
A zoo is like a pet store
Except there is more of it.

(part of a group poem in which each pupil contributed one comparison)

Hello and Good-By

Hello spring
Good-by winter
Hello warm
Good-by cold
Hello flowers
Good-by snow
Hello robin
Good-by snowman

(part of a group poem in which each pair of pupils contributed one contrast)

Wind

Wind pulls my kite
Wind pushes my ball
Wind helps me walk
Wind makes my kite go up
Wind blows my tree

(by Jeff, using repetition)

Quiet

As quiet as a mouse sleeping in my house
As quiet as a fish swimming in a dish
As quiet as a toad walking down the road
As quiet as a clown wearing a nightgown
That's what quiet is
Shhhhhhh!

(part of a group poem using repetition and rhyming pairs)

I have found that we must allow children time to play with and to use the poems we are sharing. When I give free time for poetry play, I find that some of the children make up games to go with a selected poem; some may substitute new words in a known poem; some may read old poems in a variety of voices; some may illustrate a particular poem they like; and some may read poems to a puppet. Perhaps other groups of children take slightly different directions, but they all need time to enjoy and learn from poetry. The enjoyment and involvement, through play, I believe, is one of the activities which led my pupils into writing their own poetry. Because they had experienced some poems, they had a background of knowledge and experience on which to build, using their own imaginations with words to express their ideas.

By surrounding the children with books, ones written by their classmates and ones by published authors and illustrators, by sharing a variety of poems and styles with children, by integrating poetry in all areas of the curriculum,

by allowing them time to play with a poem, and by writing numerous group poems before individual writing, it seems it was a "natural" for this group of children to begin to write their own poetry for themselves and to share with others. In responding to their oral language and their writing, I believe that it is important for the children to know that their ideas and work are accepted and treated with respect.

After starting, students wrote poetry almost daily in my classroom. Some wrote only a few lines; others wrote numerous and complex ones in a variety of styles. Most of the poems were shared with audiences--their classmates, their parents, and their teacher. They even wrote some poems for the entire school. One example of this was the stories and poems they wrote for the Young Authors' Week at our school. The children loved having their writings read by others; their expressions seemed to indicate that having others read and enjoy what they had written made all the hard work worthwhile.

The writings they have created to share have produced a wealth of reading materials which encouraged a desire for the pupils to learn to read and write. Through these experiences in composition, they have gained a great amount of self-confidence and success in the language processes. I believe they have greatly enjoyed the experiences in creating language for others to read as well as consuming that which others have created for them.

Reading and writing poetry has been an exciting experience in my classroom this year. Poetry is, indeed, a contagion when teachers and pupils interact in language activities that encourage and develop unique, expressive, and original poetic compositions.

Pleasant Local Elementary School
Pleasant Local Schools
Marion

Using Value Clarifications to Encourage Fluency in the Writing of Vocational Students

Edward L. Radcliff

When I began my teaching career at the Washington County Joint Vocational School, one of the first problems that I encountered was how to encourage my students to write. Not to write correctly--but just to write. My students saw writing as a "task," a chore to be endured. Most of them lacked motivation, had never received much encouragement from their instructors or parents, and felt generally insecure with all stages of the writing process.

After some agonizing first experiences, I discovered one activity that interested students and helped them learn to organize their thoughts in writing, Value Clarification questions. The questions assume that everyone has opinions about certain topics. Below I list a number of Values Clarification questions I've taken from Writing Power. These situations require students to build or improve upon their skills in making decisions, giving advice, taking sides, and making choices.

MAKING A DECISION: After reading the following situations, write a paragraph for each telling what you would do and why you would do it. A scribble sheet will help you get your thoughts together. Your topic sentence should refer to the situation that you are discussing.

A. You and a friend are strolling through a department store. Your friend says she's going to steal some clothing "just for fun." You don't like the idea, and you tell her so. She calls you "chicken" and says it's easy to get away with. Before you know it, she has grabbed some blouses from a table and is running out of the store. You start to run, too, but a store detective grabs you. Your friend has gotten away. Now, the detective tells you that he will call the police if you don't tell him your friend's name and address. He will have you arrested as an accomplice to the theft. You could be in serious trouble. What do you do?

B. You are in line for a nice promotion on your after-school job. As a result of a misunderstanding, however, your boss thinks that something you said to him was rude. You didn't mean it the way that he took it. Nevertheless, he won't accept your explanation. He insists on an apology. You don't think you should apologize for something you really didn't say. However, you will probably lose out on that promotion if you don't give the boss an apology. What do you do?

GIVING GOOD ADVICE: You've seen advice columns in the newspapers many times. Here's a chance to try your hand at it. (The syndicated columns by Ann Landers and Abigail Van Buren are excellent for this exercise and are readily available.) Consider carefully each of the problems explained in the letters. Then, write a letter in your notebook that tells that person how to handle the problem. Follow the form shown and address the answer to the name signed by the letter.

Dear Jody Hall,
I'm not too good-looking. I don't have the money for sharp clothes. I'm not too good at most sports. On account of this, I don't have any friends. What should I do?

Sincerely,
Lonely guy.

Dear Jody Hall,
I have two best friends. I like them both very much, but they hate each other. I don't want to stay with just one of them. The problem is whenever we get together, they always fight. What should I do?

Sincerely,
Miserable.

TAKING SIDES: When there are two sides to a question, you have to think through your own feelings before you can decide which side you are on. After reading the following paragraph, decide how you feel. Then, take either A or B as your topic sentence and develop it into a paragraph of your own, giving your reasons for taking that side.

Situation: You need a license to do almost anything. You need a license to hunt or fish. You need a license to sell liquor or to run a beauty parlor. You need a license to drive a car, and you need a license to get married. However, for one of the most important things of all, no license is needed. You don't need a license to be a parent. Anyone may raise a child. No training or experience is required. No proof of ability is needed.

A. All adults should be required to get a parent's license before they can bring children into the world.

B. Having children is a very private matter, and no license should be required to be a parent.

As a prewriting exercise to encourage fluency, the Value Clarification questions have several advantages for me. First, the essays offer writing practice, as students express their opinions and organize their thoughts. Secondly, if these essays are written at the first of the school year, the students can monitor their progress through the year. Many see marked improvement in their writing at the end of the year. Third, I can assign the essays and after reading them, concentrate more time on specific writing problems that the students have as a group. Also, since the essays are usually written in class, I have the opportunity to conference with individual students while the rest of the class is working.

Another major advantage is that students find the topics realistic and interesting. The questions explore problems that the teenagers of today can relate to and allow the instructor to become aware of the students' backgrounds and problems.

At first I feared that the topics were too personal, that parents might fear I'd overstepped my bounds. However, since I have been using the questions, I have never had a parent complain and very seldom has a student expressed disapproval or chosen not to write a particular essay. The students always have a choice as to which essay topic they write about, and they almost always enjoy the assignments.

I've found that Value Clarification questions do generate fluency. Because the students have opinions and are willing to express them, they feel more confident in what they write.

Washington County Joint Vocational School
Marietta

A Call for Audience

C. W. LeClair

Recently, a seventh-grade girl asked me to read a letter she had written to a friend. She wanted to know if her letter made sense. It did. She knew exactly what voice to use. She had an important message to send (basically she wanted to clear up a terrible misunderstanding). And she had a specific audience in mind for whom she had taken great pains to write so that there would be no further misunderstanding. To get the letter correct, she had revised it five times.

Why don't students write with this much effort in class? One reason is that they have little personally at stake in school writing. They write voiceless, dull prose when they have no audience in mind. They can write thoughtful, vivid prose when they know for whom they are writing.

As a college freshman, I had to write a paper on Brook Farm. The professor intended that we say something profound and that we say it in precise, correct English. As an inexperienced writer, I wrote, finally, to someone out there in the land where college papers are read--with predictable results. Though I had what I thought were interesting insights about Brook Farm, the paper did not succeed because--unlike the seventh-grade girl--I had no sense of audience.

One way to help our students develop a sense of audience is, simply, to make audience a part of every writing assignment. We could begin by asking students to write brief assignments to us, or to their classmates or parent, about their coursework. Or we could have them ask for something they want in writing. For example, I had a reluctant writer this year who wrote his first coherent paragraph when I told him that in order to be excused to go deer hunting, he would have to write a statement explaining how he intended to make up his class assignment.

This past year I watched a highly verbal fifth grader struggle with "a serious research paper" on NASA. He collected books and magazine articles. He sent to NASA for materials. He took notes on file cards, as he had been taught. And then, he wrote the paper, imitating the tone of a reference book in his attempt to address the great "whobody." Surely the assignment was not a waste. But it would have been more productive if he had been taught to write a livelier piece to a real audience. In fact, there is no reason why every written assignment in the middle school, the junior high school, and the high school in every subject cannot be prefaced with these questions?

To whom are you addressing this paper?
What is it that you would like to tell this audience?
What do you think they would like to learn from you?

I have watched for several years now the enthusiasm young writers have for getting something down on paper when they really have something to say to someone. Having something to say is critically important. But having something to say to a specific person or group of people completes the communications pattern.

Marietta High School
Marietta City Schools
Marietta

Creating a Writing Lab

Jane Ramseyer Hubbard

During the two years that I have taught language arts at the junior high school level, I have recognized--but failed to resolve--a number of writing-related problems:

1. Students' struggling to select a topic when they were given the option.
2. Students' feeling frustrated when they were unable to complete an in-class writing assignment.
3. Students' writing most assignments out of class, so that I saw little of the writing process.
4. Students' composing primarily for me--an audience of one.
5. Students' having to patiently wait for feedback until I could read and respond to their writing (sometimes, I confess, a matter of weeks).

Fortunately, however, during the last two years I have also completed my master's degree and participated as a Fellow in the 1982 Ohio Writing Project. Both of these programs have provided me with a comprehensive background in writing theory. I think I'm now ready to take the leap into actual classroom application by creating a writing lab approach to composition.

"Writing lab" was a new term to me when I first read Donald Murray's book A Writer Teaches Writing (1968). In it, Murray describes a class where small groups of students meet to discuss the merits and problems of each member's work while the teacher holds individual conferences. I liked this notion of the classroom as a laboratory--a place designed for investigative study, for conducting trial-and-error experiments. It seemed an appropriate concept for shifting the emphasis from the written product to the writing process. To implement a writing lab this fall, I am considering four major components: the schedule, the environment, the student's role, and the teacher's role.

Our school day is comprised of eight periods, each one approximately forty-five minutes in length. This is an adequate amount of time for most classes, but not very satisfactory for conducting writing workshops. Another teacher and I have arranged our schedules so that we will have the same classes back-to-back this year, giving us the flexibility to keep a class for a double period on one day and to trade sections for the same length of time later in the week. On lab days, when I have half of my students for twice as long, many of the time constraints should be reduced. Although activities during the period will vary, one typical class might include:

A 10-minute session for brainstorming ideas or explaining requirements
45 minutes for writing rough drafts
25 minutes for small-group discussion
10 minutes for whole-class sharing and evaluation

While students are writing, I will be able to observe more of the writing process, be available to discuss individual problems, and perhaps even find time to write my own rough draft. On the following day, students will be expected to submit both their rough drafts and their revised versions.

The classroom environment is affected by many factors, some as inconsequential as using tables and chairs instead of desks, some as significant as the teacher's relationship with students. The student's relationship with other students, however, becomes the most essential element in creating a successful writing lab environment. I know there are some classic problems with incorporating a group setting. Teachers share a strong suspicion that students will just sit and socialize, or that if peers respond to each other's writing, their comments will be (a) so general that the authors won't know how to improve their work, or (b) so negative that the students won't want to improve their work. But I also know that there are some equally classic problems in whole-class presentations and that a great deal of the student's day is structured by that method. Mason has stated, "If people are expected to occupy an enclosed space together and ignore each other, the greatest of all possible barriers to learning has already been erected" (1970, p. 79). The benefits of a group setting are numerous. As Moffett explains to teachers, "Group learning fosters motivation and confidence leading to independence and initiative. As students regularly work together, they mature in their capacity to share responsibility for the welfare of the group, little by little making your direction and consultation less necessary to their ongoing activities" (1976, p. 49). He goes on to caution teachers that in this "play-it-by-ear" teaching style you may look disorganized. But he emphasizes that group settings will work if "you welcome honest interaction with students and respect their values and judgments" (p. 52).

One of the most important functions of the response group is to provide a significant audience for a student's writing. Emig found that the most significant others in the writing of students are peers, despite the "overwhelming opportunity for domination teachers hold through their governance of all formal evaluation" (1971, p. 100). Experience in groups provides an immediate response as well, thereby reducing writing problems which fail to allow for the reader. Writing is no longer just for the teacher, feedback no longer takes several weeks.

Writing, however, is a risky business. Before I can expect students to expose their vulnerable interiors to each other, I must lay some groundwork. Students need opportunities to get to know one another at the beginning of the year and need to experience the benefits of cooperation. Groups might be formed the first several times simply to play different language-arts related games. Stanford and Stanford's Learning Discussion Skills Through Games offers a number of group exercises that require cooperation. For example, in the "Bank Robbery Mystery," students are each given one or more clues to a crime and must agree on the criminal, the method, and the motive (see Barbieri, 1977, p. 72).

The next step might be several collaborative writing efforts. Each member of the group could contribute one or more lines to a formula poem, such as "I wonder . . ." or "Summer was . . . ." An opening sentence such as Snoopy's immortal "It was a dark and stormy night" might be passed from one member to another until each has contributed several sentences to a collective story, which is then shared with the rest of the class. Another possibility to promote cooperation is to assign a group project to be presented to the class. A group might be responsible, for example, for setting the mood for a poetry-writing session by selecting music, sound effects, lights, costumes, or literary readings (Danis, 1979, pp. 48-49).

After the class has had experiences working as members of several different groups and a comfortable atmosphere is developing, there are two additional considerations that should be explored before students begin to respond to each other's writing. The first is the question, "Who are you writing for?" Most students have an implicit understanding of audience, but I feel it's valuable to graphically demonstrate this concept. One method is to select a narrative poem, a political situation, an imaginary UFO incident, or another source. Students are assigned within their groups to take on a particular

role, for example, that of the newspaper reporter, the victim writing a letter to his mother, the police officer filling out a report, the "old-timer" reminiscing years later. After members share their versions within their groups, the whole class can compare the differences found in the vocabulary, the point of view, the distance between the writer and the audience.

The second consideration that I want to stress is "What is important in your writing?" One way to emphasize this idea is to distribute two essays to each group, one which is neat and correct but has nothing to say, and the other which has surface errors, but also has style and substance. These may be collected from a previous year's class or written by a teacher expressly for this purpose. Students can struggle with the question of evaluation and attempt to establish and weigh various critiera. Or, I may share a rating system with them which gives twice as many points to ideas and organization than to style, mechanics, or penmanship to see which essay receives a higher score (Diederich, 1974, p. 54). As a whole class, we will then formulate a list of writing priorities and distribute copies to keep in our writing folders.

This is an opportune time to discuss the kinds of responses that students can expect when I grade their writing and that I expect they can give each other in groups. To counteract their tendency to zero in on errors, I will require students to first focus on the positive elements of each composition. Daiker (1982) states, "Positive reinforcement is the single most effective tool of the writing instructor." Within their small groups, students are functioning as peer instructors and should follow this belief as faithfully as I do. Daiker adds, "Specific praise is even lovelier than general praise." One of my goals will be to encourage students to expand their comments--not "This is good" but "This is good because you made me feel what you were feeling when you said . . . ." After students have discussed the strengths of the writing, it is appropriate for them to offer suggestions for improvement based upon the list of writing priorities previously generated.

The first time students share their work in response groups, it might be advisable to grade all students on their written evaluations of each member's writing as well as their own assignment. Francine Danis offers these ideas to promote accountability and communication with groups:

> 1. Have groups give brief oral reports at the end of each class period.
> 2. Ask students individually to spend a little time each week reflecting in writing on their group's activity for that week.
> 3. Give each group a notebook and have the secretary keep a record of what the group does each session.
>
> (1979, p. 52)

I think I may try using a composition checklist with my students until I feel they understand the expectations (see Appendix). Occasionally, I'd like to give a group a tape recorder and cassette and send them to the hallway or another room to record their interaction.

Once the groups understand their purpose and are finally functional, what are the students supposed to write about during these lab sessions? At this point the third and fourth components of the workshop--the student's role and the teacher's role--become important. Many kids believe that being a good student means doing what the teacher tells them to do, while I believe that good students assume a sense of ownership for their learning. We can compromise these divergent positions if the students and I alternate responsibility for their writing assignments.

Giving students the job of generating half of their topics, of course, does not resolve the question, "But what can we write about?" A partial answer is to gather sources for writing ideas and make them available for students to use. A more substantial answer, however, is to incorporate student journals as sources for topics. I must admit that I had become slightly jaded

about journal writing until I read an article about journal workshops being offered for adults by Ira Progoff that renewed my enthusiasm. The key to this response was the phrase, "loose-leaf notebooks filled with blank, lined paper and a series of 21 colored dividers" (Kaiser, 1981, p. 69). Why not organize student journals in a similar, though simplified, manner? I believe this organization can provide a sense of security for students as well as some variety in the kinds of assignments I get. Students will begin the year with a notebook divided into five to ten sections; some possible categories for the journal are: lists, letters, reactions/reviews, quotations, dialogues, images/ideas, rememberings, diary, vocabulary, thought ramblings (Brosmer, 1982, pp. 28-33). Students will be given the first ten minutes of each period to write in their journals. This time, although probably not sufficient, serves an important function in allowing students an opportunity for pre-writing, for planting some seeds of thought that may later grow into fully developed compositions.

The final component of the lab is my role as the source for writing topics. My responsiblity appears easier, since I have the curriculum as a guide. I can organize writing labs on vocabulary development; I can incorporate grammar skills into writing assignments through using sentence-combining exercises; I can choose short stories, poetry, plays, or novels as a basis for writing. The real challenge lies not in providing topics, but in structuring writing assignments to reach students who are functioning at various levels of development, at a particularly sensitive time in their lives, and thereby achieving that delicate balance between curriculum objectives and human values.

My conception of a writing lab is still in the planning stage. It will undoubtedly receive minor modificat'ons during the summer, and perhaps a major overhauling after school has begun. I cannot offer any success stories that will change your classroom overnight, nor suggest any pitfalls to avoid. I can only share the idea for what it is--one possible way to enrich the writing experiences of students.

APPENDIX

COMPOSITION CHECKLIST

TOPIC/TITLE _____ NAME _____
DATE _____

GROUP SECTION

(G = good, S = satisfactory, P = poor)

Did you listen to others sharing?					
Did you respond with some positive comments?					
Did you respond with some specific suggestions for improvement?					

COMMENTS:

STUDENT SECTION

	YES	NO
Did you complete your rough draft?		
Did you read it to your group?		
Did you make revisions based on your reading and the group's suggestions?		

COMMENTS:

TEACHER SECTION

	YES	NO
Did student submit both the rough draft and final version on time?		
Does final copy show evidence of revision, not just recopying?		
Does final copy show evidence of proof-reading?		

COMMENTS:

Jones Junior High School
Upper Arlington City Schools
Upper Arlington

The Writing Process: Assignment Guidelines

Michele D. Veneziano

I always knew that I wanted to be a teacher.

I went to college, studied hard, observed various classes, served as a teacher's aid, and student taught. All my hopes, it seemed, were coming together like a flock of birds about to fly south for the winter. I was certain my decision to instruct the leaders of tomorrow was the right one.

After receiving my undergraduate degree and teaching certificate, I wrote resumes, filled out applications, and went to interview after interview explaining my philosophies and beliefs, sure of myself and my capabilities.

One day, the phone rang and the principal of Olentangy Elementary in Columbus, Ohio, informed me that I was hired to teach a self-contained sixth-grade class. That minute I believed my life was complete. I could have my own classroom, my own students, my own dream becoming reality.

Reality!! It was not what I expected. Those first days in the classroom were more like a nightmare than a dream. This was not like anything I had expected, and I was anything but prepared. I wanted to go back to college and tell those professors that they had done a great injustice. How was I to mold the minds of tomorrow without the proper tools? Yes, my ship had set sail, but it seemed rudderless, lost in an endless sea.

I asked for guidance from my "buddy teacher." His constant reply to all of my questions was "Have you looked in the sixth-grade cabinet?" I tried to use my ingenuity. Some techniques were successful and some had failed. If I got to a stream with no bridge to cross it, I would just throw my hands in the air and journey in a different direction.

My teacher manuals became my "bibles." If the book said "Say this . . . " I said it. If it gave examples of activities, I tried them. The social studies text, the math, the science, the health became my truth, my salvation. I tried a little ingenuity or experimentation, but the frightened pup still felt lost and forlorn.

My first year of teaching ended. The summer came. I told myself that next year things were going to be different. I was going to be different. I went to libraries and researched. I bought books on how to teach and explain various concepts and ideas. By the time September arrived, my outlook was positive. I was trying new techniques and altering my approaches. A small feeling of success had surfaced. Yet insecurity still lurked beneath the surface.

Insecurity!! I believed I had overcome it. My third year of teaching, when I was transferred to teach seventh-grade language arts, proved me wrong.

I was assigned seventh graders who had difficulty maintaining the required pace. Getting past their discipline problems was the first step. Encouraging and inspiring them was the next. Once again, my thoughts wandered back to college and the improper training I received. Teaching reading comprehension and other skills, grammar, paragraph structure, I could handle. My training lacked in one area--WRITING!! The mention of that word brought pain and anguish. Moans and groans vibrated the walls. These kids had been "turned off" completely. Their past experiences with writing brought back terrifying memories. No matter what approach or technique I used, erasing those nightmares seemed as impossible as crossing that stream. Stimulating them to transfer their thoughts and experiences onto paper was impossible. The game, it seemed to me, was lost.

As time passed, I seemed to be at a standstill. The river continued to widen. My teaching abilities were showing improvement in many areas, but in the aspect of the language curriculum, one necessary skill that lacked student (and teacher) growth was writing! I was truly afraid to approach it. I, too, had that defeatist attitude. I knew in my heart exactly why my students disliked writing. The problem was that I did not know how to help them. And because I had never been afraid of water before, I knew then and there that if I let this river get in my way, I (and my students) would never go anywhere! At that moment, I realized that I had to start taking chances, just as I expected my students to do.

The answer to my question appeared as my fourth year of teaching grew to a close. The curriculum director informed me that I was being sent to a seminar on writing--The Ohio Writing Project at Miami University. As it turned out, the time I spent at the Ohio Writing Project was my salvation. I was beginning to see the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. OWP made me realize, for the first time, that I was missing out on learning about the children as they expressed themselves through their writing.

In the last four weeks, I have read research on writing, articles on promoting writing, revising writing, and, most importantly, assigning writing. I discovered at the Project that writing was much more than I envisioned. Writing is not simply the producing of essays to be graded, but a complex process. Murray says that writing is "the process of using language to discover meaning in experience and to communicate it" (1978, p. 86). As teachers, we should not be striving, at first, for that perfectly formed sentence, but rather for a vividly described personal experience. The students are not writing to show their comprehension of subjects and verbs, but to communicate their feelings and impressions to others. Writing is one way of making meaning from experience real for others, as well as for ourselves. Once this meaning is understandable, the grammatical structure will be a natural, integral part of that clear composition.

Where does the writing process begin? How can we, as teachers, incorporate this type of personalized writing into our curriculum? The first and most important step is creating a comfortable climate with little teacher direction and a lot of encouragement. The idea that writing is for grading must be dissuaded. Building the students' confidence about their own thoughts and beliefs is the key to their writing successfully. Donovan (1981) states that climate must encourage individual students to bring their own content to the course. Not only does the teacher need to see the student as a writer, but students must see themselves as writers.

After the proper atmosphere is set, teachers must provide students with assignments that bring them to self-discovery. Donovan says that assignments "should challenge the writer to imagine and form a rhetorical context with which he may account for and illuminate the issue as he sees it. He needs tasks that demand the power to look around the edges, to probe and withdraw until a suitable way of talking emerges" (p. 222). He suggests that the teachers consider these guidelines as they prepare justifiable assignments:

1. Does the assignment present issues that the writer can apply to his own experiences?
2. Is the assignment open and flexible enough to encourage different and perhaps even experimental stances toward it?
3. Is it related to the assignment which preceded it and to the one that is to follow?
4. Does it take the writer inside, outside, and, above all, just a bit beyond himself?
5. Does it suggest by its content and tone that writing carries intrinsic rewards beyond the fulfillment of academic requirements? (Donovan, pp. 222-223).

Further, to provide an atmosphere leading to self-discovery, Larson

states that "the teacher should plan every theme assignment with great care before presenting it to his students; that he should, as a part of this planning, identify the activities and operations of the mind in which the student must engage if he is to cope with the assignment; and that he should see each assignment, if possible, as part of a truly sequential course in composition" (Larson, 1981, p. 213). Larson's "series of steps" that one may follow when designing assignments is:

1. Plan the course at least in broad outline for a term and possibly a year in advance.
2. Analyze each prospective assignment carefully before you give it.
3. Consider what the student will need to know in order to do well on the assignment.
4. Decide what you must 'teach' now in order to assure students a fair chance to do well on the assignment.
5. When the first four steps have been carefully taken and you are sure that you know what activities and skills you are calling for, draft the written bulletin describing the assignment (or make notes you will use in giving the assignment orally).
6. Determine what your standards of evaluation on the assignment will be.
7. Explain the assignment to the students fully.
8. As part of your explanation of the assignment, allow time for students' questions and be ready to point out pitfalls and difficulties they will encounter as they work on the assignment.
9. In evaluating and commenting on papers, make special note of where the student has and has not succeeded in reaching the objectives of the assignment.
10. Discuss the assignments with the student when you return them.
11. Ask students to revise or rewrite. (Larson, pp. 214-218).

Good assignments should not only encourage the students to be spontaneous, but should stimulate them to learn about themselves. Really good topics involve and direct aim, audience, mode, tone, organization, and style, leading students to write purposefully from their experience.

1. AIM (the purpose of the writing): This criterion determines everything else in the process of writing. Will the writer persuade the audience, explain ideas to them, express himself, or write strictly for a personal journal or diary?

2. AUDIENCE (who the writing is for): Design the assignments so that the direction is toward a specific audience besides the teacher. This will improve the quality of the students' work.

3. MODE (how to deal with the subject matter): Will the paper or assignment be one of description, narration, theory, or evaluation? The mode as well as the aim will place the subject matter in an appropriate reader-writer context.

4. TONE (the writer's attitude toward and consciousness of his/her audience): This variable deals with the writer's perception of the audience.

5. ORGANIZATION (the developing of ideas in a coherent way): This area is directed toward the way in which the students choose to develop their ideas.

6. STYLE (the writer's choice of words, his/her sentence structure, etc.): Will the form of the sentences communicate the ideas clearly?

Approach assignments so that the students are encouraged to draw from their personal experiences. When the material is based on what they know, they will communicate more readily and more naturally. When the students arrive at writing meaningfully to them, they develop control over and talent for more sophisticated types of structured writing.

Olentangy Middle School
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Teaching Paragraph Structure: From the Old to the New

Lois D. Garwood

As eleventh-grade students enter my composition class, they are attracted to three replicas of animals that I have prominently displayed. One is a turtle, six inches in length, realistically carved in green Taiwanese marble. The second is a bright, pea green snake, two feet long, unrealistically soft and made of plush material, a prize won at a fair. The third is a lizard, three feet long, ten inches high, carved of wood by natives of the Philippines. The lizard dominates the scene because it is the least realistic, the most unfamiliar, and the most forbidding. My purpose in this activity is to create a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom, to allow students to have some interaction, and to allow students to discover and understand a plan for organizing a paragraph or an essay.

After students have thoroughly explored the objects and asked a number of questions, particularly about their origin, I lead them into a discussion of ways that these animal figures are both alike and different. We consider the origin, appearance, craftsmanship in making the animals and, sometimes, differences in the animals the figures represent. If the discussion does not elicit that they are of the same class, I interject that into the discussion. Then, students write a paragraph about the animals. As students read aloud their paragraphs, two patterns of organization emerge--the block and the alternating pattern. Next we analyze a sample paragraph using each method of organization. I choose as models those written by students or professional writers, but I choose samples that are obvious in their plan of organization. Available are audio-visual aids that can be used in this analysis. Students can see the patterns. Finally we discuss subjects that might be appropriate. Subjects which are popular include men and women drivers and rock music and country-western music. These are possibilities, but, also, I encourage students to generate topics. During the time that students are preparing a plan and writing this assignment, I suggest that in one or two journal entries they might want to practice this pattern of development.

Prior to the lesson that I have described, students have had an opportunity to learn to use a topic sentence which contains a subject and controlling idea. They have progressed from writing paragraphs developed by use of example through more complex patterns of development to writing the final paragraph theme.

This lesson is used in the context of a one-semester required course. The students have experience writing in each of the four modes of discourse, but with emphasis on exposition. What is my goal in teaching in this fashion? Lawrence (1972, p. 5) expresses my view: ". . . to provide practice in identifying a sequence of logical relationships and in using these relationships to impose order in writing." This principle is well-established in the thinking of composition teachers.

When John Genung published his The Practical Elements in Writing in 1892, he established a pattern of teaching and a view of the composing process that remained dominant for three quarters of a century. The pattern of teaching so prevalent emphasizes four modes of discourse with specific patterns of development such as cause/effect, classification, comparison/contrast, chronological, or spatial. Genung's conviction was that creative ability cannot be taught; rather, practical rhetoric must deal with the conventions and mechanics of writing. This view is promulgated today in popular composition texts by writers such as Sheridan Baker, James McCrimmon, Cleanth Brooks, and Robert Penn Warren.

Today, this method of teaching is under attack.

A study which raises serious questions about its effectiveness was published by Richard Braddock (1981). This research examined paragraphs published in The Atlantic Monthly, The English Journal, and The Richmond Times Dispatch and found that fewer than thirteen percent of the paragraphs examined were developed by use of topic sentences with support. Irmscher (1979, p. 98) reports that his graduate students found that percentages vary greatly among individual writers. Further, Braddock states, "This sample of contemporary professional writing did not support the claims of textbook writers about the frequency and location of topic sentences in professional writing" (1981, p. 323). And yet another critic states:

> In sum, today's paragraph is not a logical unit and we should stop telling our students it is. It does not necessarily begin with a topic sentence; it does not necessarily "handle and exhaust a distinct topic," as the textbooks say it must do. It is not a composition-in-miniature, either--it is not an independent, self-contained whole, but a functioning part of discourse; its boundaries are not sealed but open to the surrounding text; it links as it often divides. Shaped by the writer's individual style and by the reader's expectations as well as the logic of the subject-matter, the paragraph is a flexible, expressive, rhetorical instrument. (Stern, 1981, p. 300).

In surveying and synthesizing contemporary models of discourse, Kinneavy concludes that Britton, Moffett, and D'Angelo "favor the holistic teaching of composition over the isolated teaching of parts of the theme" (1980, p. 52). And Irmscher sums up the crux of the problem: "[W]e are now able to view the paragraph as a far more flexible unit than we previously thought. . . .What experiments with paragraphing inevitably confirm is an intuitive perception of paragraph patterns that can be separated or combined in various ways" (1979, pp. 101, 103).

Obviously, I discovered I must rethink my emphasis on paragraph patterning in my classes. Beginning in the early 60s, an investigation of new ways of teaching writing began. D. Gordon Rohman and Albert O. Wlecke experimented with students at the University of Michigan and investigated "thinking as discovery" and "prewriting" (Rohman and Wlecke, 1964, p. 17). Following their reports, experimentation and research have introduced a new way of approaching the teaching of writing, shifting emphasis from product to process. Ken Macrorie and Peter Elbow are enthusiastic about this view.

Ken Macrorie (1980b) and Peter Elbow (1973) propose that students not be limited by a form and be expected to fit their thoughts into the form, but rather that students find their form through freewriting. When freewriting is focused on a single subject, students can learn to shape their form to match their thoughts. Elbow, particularly, advocates freewriting for invention and for discovery of structure. As Elbow outlines his plan, the writer goes through four steps: first, freewriting on the subject to be pursued. Second, a study of results to find a "center of gravity." Then, a more focused freewriting. This is followed by a more controlled third freewriting. This third freewriting is edited stringently and that becomes the basis of the final draft.

My development as a writing teacher has been an evolutionary one. A dozen years ago, my first two composition classes were subjected to a well-intentioned, but rigorous, "I instruct, you write" atmosphere. My assumption was that the writing assignment was the motivator and my instruction the guarantee of success. Like many others, I was locked into teaching a prescriptive, formulaic style of writing. Not satisfied, however, I have continued to experiment and incorporate a variety of techniques. I have broadened the choice of topics, begun to use audio-visual aids, included rewriting activities and journals in my classes.

Now, following the reading, the discussions, the writing at the Ohio

Writing Project, what shall I do? To use the analysis of Laque and Sherwood (1977, p. 25) that the old grammar is mimetic, requiring students to duplicate form without generating it, that the students do not learn to think, their creativity stifled? Or do I accept the criticism of the new rhetoric that while the writing is open, creative, and honest, the writing ignores the functions of mechanics, order, and coherence? Rather than throw out what has been somewhat successful in the past, I am going to make some alterations.

This is the dilemma faced by writing teachers. Am I to discard a teaching technique that I believe--and many students say--has brought success? I am ready to alter, but not yet ready to discard totally the plan I now use in working with students at the secondary level--students who are college-bound. I will continue to emphasize the use of a topic sentence with a subject and controlling idea, other patterns of paragraph development, and the five-paragraph essay. In the past, these have been the products that I sought. Now, the prescriptive paragraph becomes only a part of writing development. I see the prescriptive paragraph and essay as exercises from which a student may progress to a more creative, personal style. Second, I will expand the prewriting activities to include more that will benefit students for whom writing is discovery. Prewriting will be intended also to break the writer's block which some students have and will assist them in generating topics from their own experience. Third, I shall again institute peer editing. My goal will be to give young writers an audience and to assist the student in revising his paper. Fourth, I will write with and share with my students.

This week, I visited with a former student, now a young lawyer. When I told him that I was attending the Ohio Writing Project where I was learning about new ways to teach writing, he responded to me, "Oh, but what you taught me has been invaluable. I use those techniques as a springboard for all the writing I do." Certainly I want to continue to reach my students. But now I will go about it with a better understanding of the writing process and sharpened awareness of the needs of all of my students.

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Fantasy: An Open Door to Fantastic Writing

Rachel Reinhard

Fantasy is an open door to writing. It is one place where the student's imagination can soar, creating new images, discovering unknown worlds, and finding unique solutions to age-old problems. Ursula Le Guin says, "The fantasist, whether he uses the ancient archetypes of myth and legend or the younger ones of science and technology, may be talking as seriously as any sociologist--and a good deal more directly--about human life as it is lived. For after all, as great scientists have said and as all children know, it is above all by the imagination that we achieve perception, and compassion, and hope" (Le Guin, 1979, p. 58).

In literature, fantasy includes folk and fairy tales, high fantasy, and science fiction--even E.T. and Star Wars. The mythic structure of the tales remains basically the same. The inevitable hero is one who will take great physical risks in a quest against a formidable antagonist whether it be the wolf in the Three Little Pigs or the orks in Lord of the Rings. Tension is heightened as one foe is overcome and another more powerful antagonist looms in the way of the hero. With each adventure, the protagonist gains a moral or physical victory. When the foe is overcome, we feel the same sense of achievement that the victor feels; and especially in high fantasy, we also know that the victory has been achieved through great personal struggle and cost. Bruno Bettleheim says, ". . . the message that fairy tales get across to the child in manifold form: that a struggle against severe difficulties in life is unavoidable, is an intrinsic part of human existence--but that if one does not shy away, but steadfastly meets unexpected and often unjust hardships, one masters all obstacles and at the end emerges victorious" (Bettelheim, 1976, p. 8).

At the eighth-grade level, I find some students who need to get reacquainted with their sense of story. Often these students are indifferent or poor readers, and their writing is as pointless to me as books are to them. Even so, I discovered that they view fairy and folk tales with delight, often reminiscing about past experiences with these stories. Since fluency is developed more easily when the student works with familiar materials, I like to use these stories each year.

Plot structure in folk tales is simple and easily understood. The beginning (setting) is easy--"Once upon a time"--and to complete the story frame, a familiar ending (conclusion)--"They lived happily ever after." The following outline was done with students using the Three Little Pigs.

SETTING:	Once upon a time
CHARACTERS:	three little pigs, a wolf
PATTERN OF EVENTS:	1. The pigs went off to seek their fortune.
	2. The first little pig built his house of straw. The wolf blew it down and ate him up.
	3. The second little pig built his house of sticks. The wolf blew it down and ate him up.
	4. The third little pig built a house of bricks. The wolf tried to blow it down and failed.
	5. The wolf tried to get the pig out of the house and couldn't.
CLIMAX:	6. So he went onto the roof and came down the chimney,
RESOLUTION:	7. and he landed in a pot of boiling water and died.

CONCLUSION: 8. The little pig lived happily ever after.

To help students understand that all folk stories contain a conflict that must be resolved, I show the rising tension (conflict) by having students place the pattern of events on an ascending line culminating in the climax and show the resolution on a descending line. While students understand conflict with little difficulty, many have difficulty with resolution. I've found it helpful to have them cross out the re in resolution and use the word solution in its place. Then when we read or tell folk tales, we talk about the story's conflict or problem and its solution.

A number of different activities generate fluency.

1. After reading folk tales, my students write a story emphasizing themes such as the rags-to-riches theme (there is a book containing 300 versions of the Cinderella story), the wicked stepmother (Snow White), the prince or princess placed under a spell (Sleeping Beauty), the industrious versus the lazy (The Little Red Hen), and the noodle-head stories (Chicken Little). Children especially like stories such as Chicken Little where the cast of characters keeps multiplying. Furthermore, students enjoy writing their stories more if they illustrate and then publish them by sending or reading them to the primary grade students or to patients in a children's hospital. One good start is to list a number of openers on the board such as:

   Once upon a time when animals could speak . . .
   Once upon a time when . . .
   Long ago and far away . . .
   In the beginning before . . .

2. Another activity which has been successful for me is to read an unfamiliar folk tale aloud in class. When I reach a place in the story where some problem must be solved, I have the children complete it.

3. Many of the folk tales have passive female protagonists. Students can change the story so that the female rescues the prince, kills the dragon, and saves the kingdom. Princess Tales (Kramer, 1971) is a good book for this purpose.

4. Some students enjoy retelling old stories using a modern or science fiction setting.

For several years I've included a reading unit on high fantasy using books by Lloyd Alexander ("Prydain" series), Susan Cooper ("Dark is Rising" series), Madeleine L'Engle (time trilogy), C. S. Lewis (Narnia books), and J. R. R. Tolkien (Hobbit, Lord of the Rings), Ursula Le Guin (Earthsea stories), and Anne McCaffrey (Pern books). Unlike folk and fairy tales, these books have complicated plots with many twists and turns, which make it more difficult to understand the shape or structure of the story. They usually involve a somewhat reluctant protagonist who, with the aid of a mentor, overcomes an evil antagonist, and the conflict almost always takes the form of a quest or journey. I have students give oral book reports by sharing wall hangings, posters, or game boards with the pattern of events illustrated and labeled in proper sequences. This activity helps the student to be aware of the tension that mounts as each trial is completed and the conflict comes to a climax and is resolved.

Other opportunities for writing abound. For instance, I've had students complete the following:

Describe the most beautiful scene in the book.
Describe the most beautiful person in the book.

Describe the worst predicament in which your character found himself/herself.

Compare and contrast good and evil in your story. Could the characters always tell the difference between good and evil?

How did your character change as a result of his/her experiences? Do you think trials improve character?

If you could have one experience that your character had, what would you choose?

With this kind of writing, it often helps to have students write dictionary or encyclopedia entries defining the people, animals, places, and other unusual things in the created world.

One way of helping students write in this genre is to have them work alone or in groups to prepare a detailed map of their "other" world. As they create this new world, they must think of the kinds of vegetation, characters, natural laws, and society that will exist in this land and suggestions for many stories will develop naturally. Students should be encouraged to let their imaginations expand and think in terms of the following:

What if . . .
Wouldn't it be wonderful if . . .
People on earth are limited by _____; in my world people can . . .

Some classes enjoy writing chapters of the story throughout the year using both chapters written by the class as a whole and other chapters written by individuals.

Another advantage to the "created" world activity is that it cuts across the curriculum integrating science (natural laws, vegetation, climate, technology) and social studies (government, transportation, religion, language, economy, arts) with writing.

John S. Goodall's (1979) wordless books are good for this genre. He has one story depicting an English village from the fourteenth century to the present. Students enjoy writing about characters moving from one century to another.

Sometimes I introduce figurative language to advanced students through authors who move from the figurative to the literal. A short book, Amelia Bedelia by Peggy Parish, is one in which the main character, a new maid, when told to dress the chicken for supper puts clothes on it, dusts the furniture with talcum powder, and hangs the light bulbs on the clothes line because she is told to put the lights out when she leaves a room. A longer book containing figurative language changed to literal is The Phantom Tollbooth by Norton Juster. In this contemporary classic, Milo, a young boy, enters the Land of Wisdom through a phantom tollbooth, discovers the two kingdoms, Dictionopolis ruled by King Azaz and Digitopolis ruled by King Azaz's brother, the Mathemagician, and after a series of adventures must swim the "Sea of Knowledge," where some people can swim for years. Because of its diverse group of characters and places, The Phantom Tollbooth provides a number of activities: I have students:

Write a paragraph on "Demons I Have Known."
Plan the schedule for the Lethagarians.
Describe the Dynne.
Pretend Alec Bings is your friend. How do you play with someone who is born in the air and grows down?
Illustrate some of the idioms in the story such as splitting hairs, hanging by a thread, or never making ends meet.

Fantasy, then, is a favorite unit for me. It incorporates themes students care about, uses a story structure with which students are familiar, encourages interest in imagery and word play, cuts across the curriculum, and--most of all--stimulates the imagination. So walk with your students through the open door--tollbooth, picture, wardrobe--to the world of "fantastic" writing!

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COMMUNITY-CENTERED WRITING USING THE FIELDWORK TECHNIQUE

Jami Spriggs

The most difficult thing I have had to overcome in my classroom is my students' negative attitudes toward writing. I think those attitudes were fostered by their sense that they had nothing important to say and no one but a teacher to write for. Fieldwork may be the way to change those negative attitudes (see Smelster, 1979).

Certainly fieldwork gives students interested audience and it also develops positive community relationships, instilling pride and responsibility in students. Students will begin to understand their parents, their community, and themselves as they have never done before. Students who have not been active contributors to your English class will turn in reams and reams of reactions to their experiences. Using the fieldwork approach to produce a community magazine is usually a tremendous success, especially in culturally and economically deprived areas. Most students enjoy the experience of seeing their name and work in print. Who doesn't? Foxfire, the first such magazine, has grown into a publication with subscribers in all fifty states and a dozen countries. Currently six volumes have been produced and the first two volumes have sold over a million copies. Foxfire's success has been duplicated in schools all over the country, particularly in areas of high dropout rates and low attendance.

The fieldwork approach to teaching writing reinforces various language arts skills. Through interviewing, students will strengthen their listening skills. They will work through prewriting, writing, and revision processes. They will pay attention to grammar, sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation. They will even become familiar with lay-out, make-up, correspondence, art, and cover design. Some will learn the related skills of typing, advertising, retailing, and fund-raising. They will learn in the best way--through actual participation.

The following articles contain fieldwork activities, give hints about interviewing, and include sample interview questions. They provide teachers with all the resources for beginning and successfully completing fieldwork projects.

Smelster, Marjorie, ed. A Guide to Using the Field Work Technique. Madison, Wisconsin: The Wisconsin Writing Project, 1979.

Treadway, Cheryl. "Using Fieldwork to Teach Writing." In Teachers and Writers: Articles from the Ohio Writing Project, eds. Mary F. Hayes, Max Morenberg, and Janet Ziegler. Oxford, Ohio: The Ohio Writing Project, 1981.

Wigginton, Eliot. The Foxfire Book. New York: Anchor Books, 1975.

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Motivating Writing in Children or Me and Mrs. Jones

John F. Wilhelm

I must begin by relating an incident told to me by another teacher. As the teacher tells it, she was standing in the hallway during a morning recess. Down the hall a bit, but within hearing distance, stood a fellow teacher, her eyes fixed in the usual stare, her posture typical (characterized by crossed arms), her lips pulled tight. Into her gaze skips Susan, obviously anxious to tell Mrs. Jones something. "Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Jones, I've got a riddle for you. There was this boy who didn't know his multiplication facts very good and he was worried about a . . ." Mrs. Jones interrupts, quite matter of factly, "I've already heard that one, dear, you don't have to finish it." The young girl walks away, looking a bit embarrassed and bewildered. Mrs. Jones, though, is quite sure what happened; she saved the poor girl's breath and time by not allowing her to finish. Another example of her perfect efficiency and excellent time management. There is just no sense in wasting precious words when one already has the message.

So it is with the teaching of writing in many elementary classrooms, I suspect. No sense in wasting precious words! But, what should be the purpose of an elementary writing program? Golub (1975) addresses this question adequately when he states that writing is discovering our inner voice and expressing it in such a way that it stimulates some sort of sensitive, creative response in the listener or reader. For teachers, it is the stimulating of this inner voice and the response it creates in others which becomes the goal (p. 71). David Holbrook (1965) speaks of this inner voice, but by another name, as he states: "Surprisingly, even in the most unlikely dust-laden classroom atmosphere one may touch the secret places of life" (p. 1).

So, then, the three following ways to stimulate that "inner voice" or find those "secret places of life" are ideals worth pursuing in any writing class.

I. MOTIVATION IS NECESSARY FOR IMPROVEMENT IN WRITING

Consider, again, the example of Mrs. Jones. Ask yourself if Susan will be anxious to share another story with Mrs. Jones. How would she react to Mrs. Jones's writing assignment about "your favorite place to be"? Children, just like adults, must be motivated from "within" when writing to write enthusiastically, naturally, and fluently.

Now, then, what ways would a Mrs. Jones motivate good writing in her classroom? What techniques would she use, do you suppose, at the beginning of the year to really "get-em going"? She may: (a) Tell them to put their names in the corner of a clean sheet of notebook paper (no yellow stuff), and write an amusing essay on their summer vacation. (b) Have them draw a picture and then write an amusing essay on their summer vacation. (c) Have them write an amusing essay on what they are going to do next summer. Most of the class would probably pick (c) because they'll already be hoping for an end to the current school year.

We probably know Mrs. Jones well enough to predict how she'll handle the grading of those "amusing" essays. We realize she'll not act excited when children write the same things she's heard for the last five years. We also know that she'll not "make a fuss" over a story that contains errors, repetitive statements, lousy punctuation, and miserable sentence structure, even though it shows some small glimmer of creativity. We're even more certain that she'll never put a "smiley face" beside a well-written phrase. "Smiley faces" aren't too efficient. Leo Buscaglia (1982) outlines the dangers of a Mrs. Jones:

> Ellis Page did a wonderful study in affect where he took his class and divided it up into three groups, A, B, and C. On every Group A paper, he put only a grade. Remember writing those wonderful papers that were a bit of you and then finding that you got it back with only a grade on it? An A, a B, or a C, a D, an F? Meaningless. You look somewhere for a little spot of spaghetti or maybe a place where some coffee has spilled on it so you can see that maybe the guy had read it? Group B, he gave them a grade and a word, like: good, fine, excellent, nice work. With Group C he stopped and wrote each of them a letter and he said, "Dear Johnny: Your syntax is atrocious. Your grammar is not to be believed. Your spelling is nonexistent. And your punctuation is like James Joyce. But you know, as I was sitting in bed last night talking to my wife, I said, 'Sally, he has the most beautiful ideas in this paper. And I'm really going to try and help him develop it.' Sincerely yours, Teacher." And if somebody did something really beautiful, he wrote down, "Thank you. You continually blow my mind. Such a good paper with so many good ideas. Keep it up. I can't wait to hear what you're going to say next." And then he did a statistical study. Group A remained the same. Group B were stationary, and Group C grew and became. (p. 35)

Irmscher (1979) makes a similar point when he suggests that the psychology of reinforcement should be the major resource of every writing teacher, and that it should be practiced whenever it can be done honestly and ungrudgingly (p. 150).

II. MOTIVATION FOR WRITING, AS IN MOST LEARNING, CAN BE ENHANCED WHEN THE TEACHER TAKES INTO CONSIDERATION THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE LEARNER

James Moffett (1975) states that all stages of a developmental sequence are crucial (p. 24), and David Ausebel (1968) explains that when a pupil is prematurely exposed to a learning task before he is adequately ready for it, he not only fails to learn the task in question, but learns also to fear, dislike, and avoid the task (p. 364). Unfortunately, sounds like a scene right out of thousands of classrooms where writing is being taught. It would appear, then, that the wise teacher will be aware of some psychological development theory. But where does one begin?

Piaget (and others) use the term "concrete operations" when discussing the psychological development of the elementary aged student (9-12 years):

> Concrete operations are logical and systematic, as exemplified in the solving of conservation problems, but the child's thinking at this stage is still tied to direct experience. Even though she may not have to manipulate objects in order to understand their relationships as she did at the preoperational stage, her thinking is limited to actual experiences. In areas about which she has acquired no direct knowledge, she reasons by analogy something she has experienced. (Biehler, 1974, p. 160).

Based on this knowledge, it would seem wise for the teacher to attempt to "trigger" students' writing as much as possible with "real" things or symbols of those real things. Hence the following list:

Using photos to stimulate stories and poems

Photos can be used to generate discussion in prewriting, or may lead some students to immediate story ideas. One caution here--take the extra time to hunt for really good photos. They are much rarer than you may at first think.

Grab bag goodies

Put as many objects in a brown paper sack as you have students and room in the bag. Only the size of the sack and your imagination are your boundaries. Have each student make a blind pick from the bag. Writing in the first person, the student is asked to write the autobiography of that object. (Older students might use the object to stir a memory, write a poem, etc.)

Comic strip writing

Here the students may make up their own comics entirely, or fill in the dialogue while you supply the pictures. Great for those who have trouble organizing thoughts on paper. Very useful for teaching things about quotations after finishing the comic strip.

Lifesaver raver

Almost everyone has experienced the lifesaver in one manner or another. This makes the lifesaver one of the more versatile writing tools on the market. Have students describe how it looks, feels, sounds, smells, and tastes. Another story another day might center around an experience or remembrance brought on while letting the candy melt in your mouth.

Balloon swoon

Let's face it. The good ole balloon sets off emotions, spawns memories, and gets people excited! Sounds like a good atmosphere for writing. Possibilities are limitless: put the end of a story in it and let the students write the rest, put one line of a poem inside and let the students finish it, describe it in terms of shape, color, texture, size, and weight, chew on it, throw it, bounce it, snap it at someone else and describe the reaction that you get, endless, endless, endless . . .

Draw, pardner

All students can draw, and strangely enough, some seem to enjoy it! All drawings start with ideas, and ideas are the "stuff" we're after. Don't be afraid to let authors also be illustrators, or at least help out in parts of the process. Poor artists may be "scared off" when drawing is mentioned, so tread lightly and make yourself useful whenever you can. Circle stories are quite popular with the younger elementary grades to develop some concepts about story sequencing.

But let's not get hung up on the concrete, so to speak. Images can be created and analogies to the real world can be made by the student that will offer further possibilities for writing. Let's explore some of these possibilities here:

Listening

I use the word listening here so as not to limit myself to only one or two possibilities. You may want students to listen to music, sounds, or just plain silence (they will discover true silence is not to be found in school, as their papers will suggest). Holbrook (1965, pp. 53-57) feels that a common teaching problem is a dullness of vision in many children, but that music helps to stir this mediocrity. Aaron Copland's "Billy the Kid" is a good place to start, but remember that music and writing may be a three-step process rather than two, where students may have to draw pictures of what they see before beginning to write. Missing the drawing step with young students may leave you with classical music haters. Holbrook adds the following list as points of departure: Aaron Copland's "The Red Pony," "I bought me a cat," "Our Town," "Piano Sonata," "Rodeo"; Leonard Bernstein's "West Side Story"; George Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess"; Alan Hovaness' "Lullaby"; John P. Sousa's "Marches"; and a list of titles without particular authors including "American Folk Tales and Songs," "A Musical History of Jazz," and "Songs of the Sioux Indians."

Discussions

Properly led discussions stir up countless ideas, bring back memories, and in the elementary grades usually lead some down the path of the "tall tale." (Sounds so much nicer than big fat liars.) Use discussions to paint pictures in minds, then stand back and observe.

Story add-ons

Have a tape recorder handy. Give the first line for a possible story. Any line will do, so don't be too picky. The students, as one large group or several smaller groups, then add another line on to the story consecutively. The story can be quickly played back if someone forgets the plot. The playback can be used for students to transcribe, as this builds confidence in those who have trouble carrying through with an idea for a story.

Now then, a few samples generated by "Grab Bag Goodies," one of the ideas from above. The samples illustrate that the techniques can work equally well for students with differing abilities.

THE WHISTLE WHO LIVED A LITTLE BAD AND LOTS OF GOOD

I'm a whistle. I can blow. I'm made in Japan. I'm little. I have a little mouth. My color is gray. I have a ball in my head people said my brain is a ball. My body is a long string. My neck is small. People blow me in gym. My Dad was a horn. My mom was a toot. I came to America in 1809. I was a baby then. I came in a box. It was fun. When I was 29 I got a job blowing. When I was 39 I got married. When I was 47 she went away. When I was 48 I started to live good. The End.

Danny (age 11)

For Danny, a milestone in complete sentences. Also a glimpse of a "not so good" homelife, in his words. Compare this with Amy, a girl from the same classroom as Danny:

MY POOR PAINFUL LIFE

First of all some people came around and bought me. I thought I was the ugliest object in the store.

Let me tell you about those nasty people who bought me. When they couldn't think of a word they bit me around the neck. They touched me by throwing me around the room when the teacher left. They let me starve from hunger at night. They even let a poor pen like me alone at night without my teddy bear, Snowflake. They even forgot me on the floor of the dirty bus, and then to top that off they didn't give me a bath after being on the bus. I hate it when the teacher says, "That's my pen now." Then he locks me up in his desk drawer, dark and lonely.

Then one day a new girl names Jennifer Thiele came to school. She asked the teacher if she could use one of his pens. The teacher said, "OK Jennifer." He took me out of his drawer and gave me to her. And I spent a happy life with my new owner. The End.

Amy (age 10)

Writing projects, next on the agenda, are assignments that take a little more time, preparation, and patience.

Good 'ole pen pals

Oh, don't worry, I can hear you already! Postage, postage, postage! Nonsense, you silly bean! Most school systems have more than one class at a particular grade level, but shoot for another building than the one you're in. Better yet, find a wonderful teacher that's as marvelous as you are in another school system and play "post office" with him/her (but don't let your principal know you play post office with anyone but

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him/her). I'd pair boys with boys, girls with girls, goldfish with goldfish to avoid numerous problems. Even if you don't realize it, you will be doing something the experts suggest, which is developing the concept of writing to different audiences other than just the teacher.

Silent Days

Unlike "Happy Days," this little gem is good only once or twice a year. It allows you to fulfill one of your fantasies--a day of complete silence in the classroom when students are there. Everything communicated that day must be done by the written word, both by teacher and students. Offer small rewards for those who can make it all day without a single utterance. Small chalkboards work great, and many students will have them at home, ready and waiting your call. Invite a newspaper or two to cover the blessed event. Newspapers hunt for new angles in school reporting, just as teachers look for novel ways to motivate!

News interviews and reports

This one takes patience. First, assign students someone to interview, preferably an adult in the school building. Interview questions should be written by the student before the interview, with space left for the interviewee's answers. When this step is complete, a report is written from each interview, keeping in mind that the student must switch from first to third person when writing the report. The finished product is read by the author in front of a video camera, if possible, and in reporter style. Makes for interesting viewing, indeed.

All of these techniques are fine motivators, and they can be adapted to fit the psychological development of the age group with which you work.

III. GOOD TEACHING OF WRITING, AS IN MUCH OF WHAT IS CONSIDERED REAL LEARNING, HAS AT ITS BASE A STRONG ELEMENT OF TRUST BETWEEN TEACHER AND LEARNER

Good feelings are generated by the teacher toward the students through respect, honesty, and mutual interest. Irmscher contends that the single most important factor that affects improvement in the composition class is the teacher-student relationship (1979, p. 49). Consider, please, just one last time (I promise), Mrs. Jones and her class full of excited minds. In less than a full teaching day she may be able to convince students that: learning is hard work and not to be enjoyed; honest feelings have no place in the "controlled" classroom; and good students can expect to do well, and poor students will live up to that label that they have carried in with them.

It is dangerous here to assume that I am suggesting that in the eyes of the "master" teacher, students can do no wrong; therefore everything they say or write will be a beautiful expression of their "inner voice." That assumption would be equally damaging to a trust relationship. Remember, honesty helps to develop the trust. Irmscher (1979) explains that if a teacher is knowledgeable and students respect the teacher for the common interest they share in making the writing as good as the students can make it, "then the teacher can begin to point out weaknesses, not ten or fifteen flaws at once, but one or two, because, psychologically we cannot cope with a deluge of our deficiencies" (pp. 150-51). It is extremely difficult to take any criticism that is directed at you from someone whom you dislike or distrust.

Consequently, I have two final "techniques" that I wish to share with you. Both involve the building of a great deal of trust and interest in the classroom and have proven effective for me in the elementary school setting.

Hobby day

Hobby days give the teacher a chance to find out where students' interests lie, enabling you to "zero in" on possible motivators, as well as getting to know the students a little better. An added attraction to this event is the practical experience students can achieve in writing rhetorically;

Larson (1975) urges teachers of composition to alert children to the needs and interests of audiences, and how to help children satisfy these needs without feeling that their personal goals and wishes in writing are being compromised (p. 399). For hobby day, I ask students to bring in their favorite pastime (some don't know, yet, what a hobby really is and that they have many) and to be prepared to write and display a description of how they became involved in that particular interest. This writing must be presented in their best handwriting and style, as it will be displayed along with their hobbies for "all the world to see." Parents are invited to visit the hobby museum as well as other classes in the building. Our school has found that local newspapers like to cover hobby day also! The activity works best, probably, in grades 2-6, although variations could broaden the range considerably.

The following are some examples of paragraphs taken from my fourth-grade hobby day:

STAR WARS COLLECTION

I started collecting Star Wars people when I was 8 years old. I have 16 Star Wars men and two spaceships. The name of them are Han Solo, Luke Skywalker, R2D2, Chewy, Stormtrooper, C3PO. I plan to keep collecting them for a long time.

by Frank

WORKING ON MOTORS

I like to work on motors it is fun. I was learning when I was 7 years old. It is fun taking the motor apart and putting it together. I like helping take the motor out of a car. I like doing repairs.

by Mike

Writers' Club

Moffet maintains that it is essential that the student address someone besides the teacher and get some kind of feedback other than red marks. He recommends that the student be accustomed to write to the whole class as being the nearest thing to a contemporary world at large; thus compositions should be read in class, out of class, reacted to and discussed (Larson, 1975, p. 26). In my classroom, these needs are met by my most encompassing project, The Writers' Club. This idea for a writers' club grew out of my frustrations to motivate and later to grade student writing. So, at midyear I posted the following sign on a large bulletin board in the room:

ATTENTION YOUNG AUTHORS

Grade 4 is about to begin a writers' club. All members will be eligible for the following benefits:

1. Written stories can be read to the entire class.
2. Stories and writings that members agree are well done can be placed in the school showcase for a period of two weeks.
3. Students who write a total of 5 or more stories will receive a certificate.
4. Members will be allowed to create a booklet cover to contain all stories.

After the first week and without any more explanation from me, 15 of my 22 students had signed up. At that point I wasn't sure what I would do with the "hold outs" who wanted to see what this club was all about before putting down their John Hancocks (Mama didn't raise no dummies).

Resistance collapsed, however, when members were given some free time to design their book covers. To coin an expression, "I had met the enemy . . ." Writers' Club usually met once a week. Some weeks were spent practicing handwriting, others on mechanics that might need particular attention. No formal grading was done, although students were allowed to offer constructive criticism and/or praise, if the writer chose to read in front of the class. Most students chose to read everything, and had a sense for when a story was particularly good or bad. Critics were asked to be specific. I, in turn, was satisfied that they were learning, improving, and allowing me not to grade their work.

CONCLUSIONS

My thoughts on learners will not be new to many, and to suggest that as the reason for writing them down would be to miss the entire point of the paper. I, the learner, have discovered them, used them, and revised them so as to fit them into my particular pedagogy. For anyone now to tell me that my thoughts are not original, that I have made no new discoveries or developed any relevant principles would be a tragedy indeed. And so it is with those children that we teach. Newness and discovery are relative terms; relative to each child that finds them in our classroom, and (heaven help them), in Mrs. Jones's classroom.

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Malinta

Sentence Combining and Peer Evaluation

Kenneth A. Colatruglio

After twelve years of teaching and many painful hours of grading student essays, I was ready for a change. No matter what I did, the results were the same: frustration and red ink. So I decided to set some specific goals and try to find ways to facilitate them. Setting the goals wasn't difficult. I knew I wanted to have students write more, to grade fewer student papers, to increase student involvement, and to obtain more improvement in student writing skills.

When it came to facilitating, I didn't know what to do. But a series of events proved serendipitous. One of my former colleagues had requisitioned William Strong's Sentence Combining: A Composing Book (1973). Then he accepted a position at another school, and the book sat on the shelf in the English office for one whole year before I decided to see what it was about. Frankly, I thought the material too juvenile to suit my junior and senior classes. The exercises are of two kinds. Some simply ask students to combine kernel sentences into longer, more complex sentences. Others ask them to build paragraphs and short essays with the sentences. But I was desperate enough to try anything, even sentence and paragraph building exercises based on the premise that "students unconsciously know rules of English syntax" (Smith, 1981).

After some trial and error, I developed a method for using the exercises. For one thing, I emphasize that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers--just answers that are more or less effective than others. I also encourage students to try different patterns--to experiment so that they could increase their ability to control effectively sentence structure and word order. The following, entitled "Parable 1," is typical of the exercises in Strong:

1. A Fox saw a Crow.
2. The Crow was flying.
3. The Crow had some cheese.
4. Her beak held the cheese.

5. The Crow settled on a branch.
6. The branch was on a tree.

7. Fox wanted the cheese.
8. Fox approached the tree.
9. Fox spoke to Crow.
10. Fox called her Mistress Crow.

11. Fox paid her compliments.
12. Crow looked well.
13. Crow's feathers were glossy.
14. Crow's eyes were bright.

15. Fox considered her voice superior.
16. Fox asked Crow to sing.
17. Fox would hear one song.
18. Fox would call her Queen of the Birds.

19. Crow lifted her head.
20. Crow cawed.
21. Crow opened her mouth.
22. Crow dropped the cheese.

23. Fox snapped it up.
24. Fox wanted one thing.
25. That thing was the cheese.

26. Fox gave Crow some advice.
27. "Flatterers can't be trusted."

Here is one student version:

> A Fox saw a flying Crow with some cheese held in her beak. The Crow settled on a tree branch. The Fox wanted the cheese and he called out to the Crow, calling her Mistress Crow. He paid her the following compliments: she looked well; her feathers were glossy; and her eyes were bright. Fox even considered Crow's voice superior, and if she would sing him a song, he would call her "Queen of the Birds."
>
> Crow lifted her head and cawed; her mouth opened and out dropped the cheese. Fox snapped it up, for the one thing that he wanted was the cheese.
>
> As he left, Fox gave Crow some advice. He said, "Flatterers can't be trusted."

When the students have written their versions, I ask them to exchange papers and evaluate the effectiveness of the paragraphs based on the criteria that they had derived from the previous discussion or on an evaluation form of my devising, similar to this:

1. Read the paragraphs, checking for punctuation. In pencil, attempt to correct any mistakes that you think are there.
2. Write the sentence combination that sounds best to you.
3. Write the one (if any) that you think is the weakest.

The form initiates student discussion and leads to three important consequences--(1) an increase in sentence-building and paragraph-building skills; (2) a recognition that this increase is the result of their own writing based on their own standards, not those of the teacher; and (3) a realization that the teacher is not a dictator. The teacher becomes for them a source of information, an aide--not a threat with checkmarks and point deductions. Most important, the teacher is partner, helping students learn to use their language.

Although I use the blackboard and discussions as methods of working with sentence-combining exercises, other methods of classroom management are effective, too. Strong, for instance, recommends the use of blank transparencies given to groups of two to four students, who then collaborate to transform the sentences into one paragraph, with the results placed on the overhead for student feedback (1976).

One of the built-in benefits to sentence combining is that it provides a ready-made context for students to use for "personalizing" their writing. Even the reluctant student who, after being given a writing assignment, sits, pen-in-mouth and hand-on-head, staring at the ceiling or out the window, has a topic on which to write. He can no longer claim, "I never have anything to write about." All he has to do is add his tone, his emphasis, his syntax. When a student does not have to stare at a blank paper, half the fear of writing is eliminated, and he can concentrate on the process of writing effectively.

Another benefit to sentence-combining exercises is that students can take risks with their syntax, try unusual options without fear of penalty. So they have increased opportunities to develop control of their syntax and thereby write more mature papers. As Kerek et al. claim, "There is little doubt that much of the recent appeal of sentence-combining practice to researchers and teachers alike derives from its demonstrated ability to improve the quality of students' writing" (1980, p. 1063).

The following student version of "Parable 1" demonstrates the "personalizing" of tone, emphasis, and syntax. The student could add description or

action; the only requirement was to include dialogue:

> A Fox saw a flying Crow that had a piece of cheese in her beak. As Crow settled on a nearby tree branch, Fox approached the tree, thinking, "I want that cheese."
>
> He addressed Crow. "Hello, Mistress Crow. You look so well today. Your feathers are glossy and your eyes are extremely bright." After a short pause, during which he assessed the effects of this flattery, Fox continued. "You know, Mistress Crow, I consider your voice superior, and if I could hear you sing just one little song, I would call you 'Queen of the Birds.'"
>
> By this time Crow's vanity could be restrained no longer. She lifted her head and opened her beak to caw her horrendous tune, the cheese dropped from her beak.
>
> "The ignorant old biddy!" Fox mused as he snapped up the one thing that he had wanted, the cheese.
>
> Standing stupefied at what had happened, Crow heard Fox offer some advice as he left: "Flatterers can't be trusted."

Because increasing the students' audience is one of my goals (it gives students confidence), I make several attempts to get the works read by others. First, I allow students to have a partner read and comment on the rough drafts. Then I ask students to read their papers aloud. In addition, I display some pieces on the "AUTHORS" bulletin board. Furthermore, I ask them to submit their best works for publication in the English department's literary log (a magazine sold to students). Students enjoy the recognition afforded by such publicity.

A classroom note. I try to guard against students who would let their peers do most of the work for them by having the students keep manila folders for their writings. I have a cut-and-paste period at the start of the year during which students divide the folders into three sections: freewriting, sentence combining, and essays. Besides including the students' papers in these folders, I have self-evaluation and peer-evaluation forms on which students keep progress reports. If the peer is marking the same errors, I note this when I periodically read the evaluations and have conferences with my students.

Sentence combining and peer grading have worked for me. My four goals are being realized now, and my students are believers in the system. Never before had I seen or heard students discuss spontaneously grammar, usage, punctuation, syntax, and tone. And never have I seen my students so actively involved in trying to improve their work and the work of others. As somewhat of a testimonial, I have included below some of the comments that students have written on their evaluation (progress report) forms:

> I did not realize until this year that I could learn to improve my writing. I just thought that I was not one of those born writers.
>
> I have learned more this year than all of my other years [high school] combined.
>
> I know more now about what makes a good essay. Thanks.
>
> The sentence-combining exercises have really helped me improve my sentence patterns.
>
> Grading papers has taught me to avoid certain errors.

I didn't know how offensive and confusing poor punctuation was until I started to evaluate papers in this class.

Comments like these and the realization of my goals have convinced me that sentence combining with peer grading belongs in my classroom.

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Extending Literature Through Writing in the Elementary Classroom

Ann DiPangrazio

My involvement with using literature to stimulate writing has evolved over several years. During my first year of teaching, I relied heavily on teachers' guides and old plan books for ideas. I read aloud daily, and I even attempted one activity which used literature to stimulate writing, prompted by vivid and pleasant memories of a student teacher I had in the fifth grade who read several stories from Kipling's Just So Stories and then asked us to write our own versions of such tales.

So one day, I read two stories to my class and immediately asked them to begin writing. The children managed to complete the assignment, but it was not the successful experience I had hoped for. As I analyzed what went wrong, I realized that I should have spent more time discussing Kipling's technique and style. I filed this information away for future reference.

The next year I began by sharing less complicated tales than Kipling's and discussing their characteristics. I then read three of Kipling's stories aloud, again talking about form, unusual names of places and main characters, and complexities in sentence structure. We listed possible titles on the board: Why Beaver Has a Flat Tail, Why Ostrich Has a Long Neck, and How Rabbit Got His Long Ears. I encouraged students to continue sharing their thoughts with each other before they wrote their own stories. As Moffett claims, "Talking to others and talking to oneself teach writing, because they are composing acts" (1976, p. 149).

This time the assignment succeeded. Children shared stories with creative beginnings, descriptive language, and well-planned plots. One story began in this way: "Once in far away Ikabika lived a man and a beaver." Other stories were about "a donkey named Oomtah from Abcab" and "ostriches Lauzome and Gauzome from Agitation." I was pleased with the creative endings concluding these stories. Ostriches developed long necks from falling off a cliff and hanging from a branch for three hours. Birds sprouted feathers as a result of flying through a tree while coated with honey and collecting leaves.

This activity involved imitating a form, but literature can also provide a different springboard for writing. My fourth grade students were quite successful developing color poems after listening and reacting to Mary O'Neill's Hailstones and Halibut Bones. In order to provide rich sensory images, children worked in groups to develop their own color displays. A daffodil, a yellow mixing bowl, an egg cracked open in a dish, a pencil, and a yellow sweater, attractively arranged, helped create an atmosphere for writing poetry. Other displays were grouped around the room. Children began by listing and describing items that were a particular color. As I met individually with students, we discussed the descriptive language in their writing, and I suggested the use of a thesaurus in selecting unusual adjectives and verbs. I also encouraged them to create images that appealed to all five senses. The following examples of student writing indicate that students developed a rich use of language.

Purple

Purple sounds like
thunder in a storm.
Purple smells like
a lilac
on the eve of summer.

Purple looks like
a violet
just blooming.
Purple is the evening
just before
it says goodnight.

by Wendy Gardiner
grade 4

Yellow is . . .

A newly born chick running
about the farm yard,
Firefly lights flickering
in the night.
A canary singing joyful songs
in its cage.

The sun giving off its beautiful
sunlight.
Mother's flowers growing
in the garden.
That fun feeling
of happiness.

A fresh squeezed sour lemon,
That good summer squash,
A hot candle flame
burning in the night.

by Jenny Sayre
grade 4

Yellow is Yellow

Yellow is . . .
The yellow sunlight shining on my back.
Crunchy, crackling yellow hay.
The topaz twinkling on a king's crown.
The taste of sour lemon.
Piercing yellow marble glowing owl's
eyes in the black night.
Sizzling melting butter on popcorn.

by Eric Craig
grade 4

Their poems were shared with the class and displayed on a bulletin board in the "color corner." Accompanying the poetry was a graffitti board to encourage students to add expressions with references to color such as: "blueblood," "green with envy," and "yellow bellied."

In another literature-inspired writing exercise, I used Parish's Amelia Bedelia series, which contains humor resulting from Amelia misunderstanding words or phrases with multiple meanings. For instance, told to put out the lights, Amelia carries them outside. My children created their own episodes, which they edited and compiled into a classroom booklet. Their stories ranged from Amelia baking a "grasshopper pie" to having a "barn dance."

At sixth grade camp, I shared Evans' The Tiniest Sound as we all sat amid a forest of hemlock trees on pine cones and dried leaves. A rushing stream flowed past, cascading down a small incline. Discussing the images created in this book sharpened students' sensitivity to language. Their own descriptions of quiet sounds were difficult to distinguish from those in the

book. They created illustrations using nature's offerings in place of pencils and paint: moss, dirt, dandelions, and burnt sticks.

As my awareness of books for children grew, I discovered some new favorites to read aloud to my fourth grade class. Molly Hunter's A Stranger Comes Ashore, based on the Scottish legend of the Great Selkie, was a class favorite. They enjoyed The Great Gilly Hopkins, a touching book which traces the changes in Gilly, a foster child, as a result of feeling needed for the first time in her life. My favorite book to share aloud is Tuck Everlasting, the story of Winnie Foster, who is given an opportunity that many of us might wish for--to live forever by drinking water from an underground stream.

To make literature more memorable for students, I used various activities. Students pretended to be other characters from The Great Gilly Hopkins describing Gilly. Students tried to convince Winnie Foster to follow their advice on whether or not to drink the water. We discussed the symbolism found in Tuck Everlasting, the repeated references to a wheel, a music box, and a friendly frog. I had hoped to develop critical thinking skills through these activities, but I discovered an indirect effect; students' writing improved. They developed characters better, they used more metaphorical language, and they included vivid descriptions of setting. Their appreciation of the writing of others also seemed to grow. They begged me to share literature with them. And I did so--gladly!

The following year, I included some new activities based on folk and fairy tales. Folk and fairy tales contain simple story construction, as well as dramatic action and dialogue, which can be used to build an understanding of story elements. My students read and discussed a variety of folk tales. They worked in groups making charts comparing folk tale variants and were surprised that similar stories would occur in different cultures. (A list of variants appears in the appendix.) Groups worked on an additional activity which they selected from the list in the appendix. Fairy tale museums, newspapers, and cookbooks decorated our room. Students rewrote fairy tales from different points of view and in modern settings. One group created a game with a Cinderella theme. Discussion and writing were important in all of these activities.

After teaching fourth grade for three years, I was ready for a new challenge and transferred to first grade. I began my literature program by saturating students with nursery rhymes which they heard and recited and read. We acted out the rhymes and designed murals to illustrate them. Together we added new verses to some of our favorites. They loved adding lines to "Old Mother Hubbard."

I used literature in other ways. Some weeks we would focus on a collection of stories by one author, including Ezra Jack Keats, Bill Peet, Leo Lionne, Dr. Seuss, Arnold Lobel, and Charlotte Zolotow. During our study of Ezra Jack Keats, we discussed his method of illustration, collage. Children collected materials for their own attempts at imitating his style. They dictated a story to me while I typed on the primary typewriter. This helped them to see the connection between oral and written language. In order for students to understand how the rough uneven texture of a collage becomes flat in a book, we took slides of their pictures. Then students wrote letters home to their parents, inviting them to see our slide presentation.

Other weeks I would share books on a particular theme, such as stuffed friends, alphabet books, animals, families, monsters, and wishes. Another of our first writing experiences involved imitating the patterns found in two alphabet books, All About Arthur, which uses alliteration, and Ape in a Cape, which uses rhyme. As a class, we wrote our own versions of these stories. Both rhyme and alliteration are good ways for first grade students to play with language.

Children brought in their own special friends to share during a literature unit which focused on stuffed animals and toys. I shared several books with this theme: Ira Sleeps Over, William's Doll, Corduroy, Alexander and the Wind-up Mouse, Winnie the Pooh, and The Velveteen Rabbit. They didn't move a muscle as I read these stories. One of their first attempts at composing and transcribing independently followed. Each student wrote his/her own descriptions and stories about their special friends. I was available to provide assistance to students who had difficulty writing on their own.

At the end of the year, I shared a variety of animal books with the children. We discussed the stories, comparing setting, characters, language, and whether the story was real or imaginary. As the pattern of our discussions became more familiar, students began responding to books without questions. They used this framework to compare other stories. They were displaying their awareness of literary tools. After our discussions, I asked them to write. I reminded them to include (1) a description of their characters, (2) a place, (3) the problem, and then to decide if their story would be real or make-believe. They eagerly shared their stories and excitedly raised their hands, hoping to be first. Following this, I displayed their efforts along with illustrations.

In the future, I will continue to interweave literature and writing. During my first year of teaching, students frequently claimed that they couldn't think of anything to write about. As the years progress, this comment becomes less and less frequent. Literature provides both the stimulation and motivation for good writing.

Appendix

Folk Tale Variants to Compare

I. Cinderella theme
   1. Mbane, Phumla. Nomi and the Magic Fish. Doubleday.
   2. Perrault, Charles. Cinderella. Scribner.
   3. Steel, Flora. Tattercoats. Bradbury.
   4. Whitney, T. P. Vasilisa the Beautiful. Macmillan.

II. Rumpiltskin theme
   1. Grimm Brothers. Rumpiltskin. Walck.
   2. Ness, Evaline. Tom Tit Tot. Scribner.
   3. Uchida, Yoshike. The Sea of Gold and Other Tales. "The Ogre Who Built a Bridge." Scribner.
   4. Zemach, Harve. Duffy and the Devil. Farrar Straus.

III. Stone Soup theme
   1. Brown, Marcia. Stone Soup. Scribner.
   2. Fleming, Greg. Baba Yaga's Geese and Other Russian Stories. "Boiled Ax." Indiana University Press.
   3. McGovern, Ann. Stone Soup. Scholastic.
   4. Zemach, Harve. Nail Soup. Follett.

IV. Fisherman and his Wife theme
   1. Carle, Eric. Eric Carle's Storybook. "Fisherman and His Wife." Franklin Watts.
   2. Gag, Wanda. The Fisherman and His Wife. Cowand McCann.
   3. Godden, Rumer. The Old Woman Who Lived in a Vinegar Bottle. Viking.
   4. Grimm Brothers. The Fisherman and his Wife. Greenwillow.

V. No Room theme
   1. Dobbs, Rose. No Room. David McKay
   2. Hirsch, Marilyn. Could Anything Be Worse? Holiday House.
   3. McGovern, Ann. Too Much Noise. Scholastic.
   4. Zemach, Margot. It Could Always Be Worse. Farrar.

Folk and Fairy Tale Activities Which Inspire Writing

1. Retell a familiar story assuming a different point of view.
2. Write a modern version of an old tale. Example: "Cinderella Goes to the Disco."
3. Write a fairy tale newspaper.
   a. Lost and found column.
   b. Society page.
   c. Major headlines and articles.
4. Write a fairy tale cookbook. Example: Baby Bear's Porridge; Stone Soup; Henny Penny's Bread.
5. Play with the language in folk tales by making a list of refrains.
   Example: Mirror, mirror on the wall . . .
   Fe Fi Fo Fum . . .
   Write your own story with an original refrain.
6. Develop a fairy tale museum. Write descriptions of items that you would include. Example: an acorn--the very piece of sky that fell on Henny Penny's head; a red brick--from the third pig's house, donated by a demolition crew making way for a freeway.
7. Construct a game to accompany a folk or fairy tale. Be sure to write clear directions.
8. Write a comparison of folk tale variants.
9. Make your own slide presentation to illustrate a favorite tale. Write the script to accompany the slides.
10. Share a "Blue Willow" plate. Read The Legend of the Blue Willow Plate, by Alvin Tresselt. Discuss the legend. Write your own story and on a paper plate design your own pattern to illustrate your legend.
11. Read examples of porquoi or "why" tales. Write your own mythical explanations to explain natural phenomena.

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Writing Home: Using Fieldwork to Write About Our Families and Communities

Scott Barr

FIELDWORK. The word has a healthy sound to me, the son and grandson of farmers, an agricultural aura. Images of brown earth and straight green rows of crops. The rumble of tractors and the scraping of shiny-handled hoes. The scent of new-mown hay. Tired muscles, calloused hands, brows beaded with honest sweat. Dipperfuls of cool water at break time. But to me the English teacher, fieldwork means the process of moving beyond the confines of the classroom, moving from the abstractions of book learning to practical reality. It means talking to our families and neighbors and discovering what they know about life. It also means exploring the rich resources to be found in our homes and communities.

By seeking out information from families and communities, our students can grow to appreciate the values of life where they are. Wendell Berry, a Kentucky teacher, writer, and farmer whose work revolves around his native place, sees this appreciation as being the necessary first step towards the establishment of settled, responsible, productive lives. Marion Mohr, a teacher at Groveton High School in Fairfax, Virginia, says, "Writing is a process of discovering identity, both individual and communal. Family folklore and oral history provide the developing writer with directly accessible material for making these discoveries" (1980, p. 34).

My personal discovery of the importance of family and community awareness serves as an example of fieldwork's potential. Whenever I introduce the idea of a fieldwork project to my students, I try to whet their appetites by sharing a little of my own findings. "Let me tell you about Aunt Maggie," I begin.

My great-great-great Aunt Margaret Swope was a school teacher and a writer, so I feel a sense of affinity with her which goes beyond kinship. As I have searched for my family's history, she has been like home base--a place to start from and return to. Aunt Maggie taught at the one-room brick Ridge School, within buggy distance of the farm where my family has lived since 1801. My grandfather recalls that she was a stern yet gentle woman. As a boy he often came into the kitchen (with one eye on the pie safe) asking for a mid-afternoon snack, only to have Aunt Maggie take out of the icebox the remnants of his noon dinnerplate. "Waste not, want not" was her domestic policy.

I found a few years ago in the catch-all attic of my grandparents' farmhouse several old agricultural yearbooks which Aunt Maggie had pasted full of romantic verse (she never married), clipped newspaper articles about gruesome murders and bizarre 1800s happenings, "receipts" for everything from rheumatism remedies to cookstove biscuits, and obituaries of relatives and neighbors in our Cedar Hill community. These make-do scrapbooks reveal much about the early life of my home community.

I also found in the attic a little brown handmade book with the unusual title: "The Family Hair Book." The pages were filled with braided, ribboned, pressed, and labeled locks of hair from Swope family heads. Rhymed verse accompanied some of the displays:

> Remember her who once did ware
> Upon her head this lock of hair.

Seeing those ancestral curls made my scalp tingle!

A further discovery of Aunt Maggie's literary handiwork was a black

leather diary, covering the Civil War period. It is a fascinating artifact, worth quoting at length:

August 9th 1852. Samuel Swope volanteered in the United S. service left Camp Circle(ville) Aug. 29. Pa & Ma, Em & I was there to see him start at 8 P.M.

April 11, 1863. Pa and Beck went to Circle(ville) Beck got some roots; rose and raspberries

April 12, 1863. rain all afternoon. Mrs. Dresbach spends the after noon--Frank came here in the evening telling of his disapointments

April 13, 1863. I was to see Mrs. Glick got a white piny root received 2 letters from S.S. enclosed in one I found some verses for my album

May 5th, 1864. Mr. Barr took dinner with us

May 25th, 1864. A Canadian pedler stayed all night

June 23rd, 1864. went to Royalton purchased 45 yards muslin at 45 & 55 cts. per yd.

July 11, 1864. Received a letter from S. stating that a ball had struck his gun glanced and bruised his left shoulder in June 25th

July 18th, 1864. Baked in the cook stove and almost roasted as it was a very hot day

August 9th, 1864. had thrashers for brekfast received 2 letters from S. stateing that a Jonny had shot throug the top of his hat on 26 of July just grazing the skin. Just as Ma, Em & I had sat down to eat our dinner a messenger came to tell us that Mr Dressbach was shot by triflin ornery John Corder, Ma & I went up immediately found him dangerously wounded, and the family very much distressed do not think he will live till sundown. poor man he breathed his last between sun down and dark

August Sat. 13th. The neighbors was all far & near gathered up to search the cornfield for the murderer returned home about 2 oclock P.M. did not find the scamp

September 5th, 1864. Heard the good news that Atlanta and all her Confederates was captured without battle. hope it is true

Thurs. 13th of Oct. I baked 8 loaves of bread 13 pies and 2 duch cakes

Tuesday (Dec., 1864). Today Allice Peters (if no preventing Providence and it don't rain--yes but it's raining now 6 P.M.) is to become the bride of Mr. Creed. We butchered it proved to be a pleasant day

Sat. Jan 21, 1865. Raining but good sleighing all day

Sat. April 15, 1865. This eve the sad and distressing news came of the assassination of President Lincoln.

W. 21 of June, 1865. this eve brother S. returned from the army honerably discharged after helpin to quell the wicked rebellion

that has been rafing through our land for the last 4 years. he is hearty, but feels very sorry that so many of their boys was left behind, his "Co" went out with 83 and returned with 33.

The ultimate sample of Aunt Maggie's personal compositions is a family history essay she wrote in 1909, two years before her death. Titled "Memoir of David Swope and Descendants," it recounts the journey of my great-great-great-great grandfather and his family from Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, to our Fairfield County, Ohio, farm. I remember reading this narrative as a boy and being transported back through time by the anecdotes and descriptions it contained. It, too, is worth quoting in part:

> David Swope and his wife Mary Cole Swope emigrated from Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania in the month of May or June 1801 in company with his father-in-law Thomas Cole to Fairfield County, Ohio. In the dense forest that then covered the lands they undaunted began to make a home. They cleared the land and built cabins and with their neighbors endured the privations and hardships of pioneer life. A convenient cabin was built with one window, a door hung on wooden hinges fastened with a wooden latch and put through a gimlet hole in the door, to lock the door, all that was necessary was to pull the string inside. The Indians regarded those who left the latch string of their cabin doors outside as friendly, but those who took in the string were objects of suspicion.
>
> Grandfather Swope died in 1826. He had by thrift and industry accumulated sufficient to give each of his children a home. The home farm situated in Amanda Township, Fairfield County, Ohio went to the youngest son David Swope, who not inclining to farm life offered the farm for sale and was bought by father (Thomas Swope).... Thomas Swope married Rebecca LeFever in December, 1827 and soon took possession of his farm which he cleared and on which he built a two story brick house, a large frame barn besides other buildings needed in the successful operation of a farm.
>
> In 1819 father and a man named Hooker built a raft and loaded it with produce for New Orleans. The trip down was rapid and easy, but the return was not so. They took frequent strolls on the river bank. One day they heard a woman screaming. Hooker said he would go and see what the trouble was. He found a man whipping his wife, when he expostulated with the man for his ill treatment of his wife he was chagrined to hear the woman telling him that it was none of his business and that if her husband wanted to whip her he could do it. He returned to the raft if not sadder certainly a wiser man.
>
> Children that you may know that Father and Mother began their married life at the bottom of the ladder. Father made a little square table, this with three splint bottomed chairs and a chest. Mother by her industry at the spinning wheel and the loom, furnished linen, linsey, a bedstead, a stand and side saddle, upon which her six daughters learned to ride. Somewhat different from what young Americans present manner of riding is. Father walled in a lot to serve as a burying ground in which his father, a brother and sister, a niece and the oldest and youngest of his own family were buried, the two last have with in the present year 1909 been removed to the Amanda Township Cemetary and placed beside Father and Mother.
>
> Father--Thomas Swope was born Feb. 19, 1800, died Aug 13, 1884.
>
> Mother--Rebecca LeFever Swope was born Oct. 10, 1806, died Aug. 15, 1887.
>
> In 1837 sorrow came to Father and Mother by the sudden death of brother David who fell from a loaded wagon and when

found by father was underneath the wheel with the life gone out. Emma J. was the next to leave us in 1872 caused by pneumonia leaving her two helpless children to our care. Thus in Father and Mother's lives their oldest and youngest were taken from them. Since Father and Mother's death two more of the family have gone from among us. Rebecca and Jacob died in 1906.

I have Aunt Maggie's picture, oak-framed, on my living room wall at home. The colors of the old photograph are somber--her black plain high-buttoned dress, dark center-parted hair pinned in a bun to the back of her head, a cloudy brown and grey-tinted background. But the expression on Aunt Maggie's face--eyes glinting with humor, mouth pursed with mother-wit--radiates a warm color which, like a violet pressed in a family Bible, extends right out of days past to cheerfully lighten nowadays.

Every family is unique and exciting in its own special way. A little prodding around in old photograph albums, dusty attics, and grandparents' minds will surely turn up something of interest for almost every student. Once students are interested in a topic, they will write prolifically.

Elliot Wigginton, an English teacher in Rabun Gap, Georgia, and originator of the now-famous Foxfire fieldwork project, claims that students' involvement with their communities facilitates the learning process. "Through links with the community, any skill can be taught, and more memorably and more forcefully than it could ever be taught through a textbook or lecture" (1980, p. 7). Teachers who have used the fieldwork approach find that textbook lessons are enlivened by the concrete experiences that their students bring back to the classroom.

My own experience with community-oriented fieldwork began in a college folklore class project, in which we were to interview several people and develop the information we found into an organized presentation. We followed the procedure of the oral historian: interviewing, transcribing, editing, and publishing. I chose to explore the farmlore of my own rural community. The following is a sample of the kinds of things I discovered:

from an interview with Bob Pontius, age 43, farmer and factory worker:

Q: How do you tell if it's going to rain?

A: I do my rain dance! Do you know Huffer (a neighbor) caught me doin the rain dance last summer? He pulled up there, out there one day, and I didn't know he came up. Boy, I was doin the rain dance back there! He got out of the car, and he thought my cattle were out back there; he thought I was runnin the cows or somethin! He came back here and he said, "What are you doin?" and I said, "I'm doin the rain dance!"

Q: Did it rain?

A: Dag gone right, next day, buddy, we had rain! It rained that one day, didn't it? We had 13 inches. They said, "How do you get it to stop?" and I said, "I don't know! I just got it started!" And it rained 13 inches.

from an interview with Arthur Swingle, age 77, vegetable grower:

In 1923 I started gardening outside. I started out the first year, I grew stake tomatoes. I had about 6000 plants, and they were growin along real fine. The Almonds, who were friends of ours, Virgil came along one day and looked at the tomatoes, and he said, "I'll give you," I forget what it was, "for the whole patch, just as is." He said, "I'll take all the chances, whatever happens to 'em." I wished afterwards I'd taken him up,

cause just when the tomatoes started ripening, we had a hail storm! It happened in June, almost July, because they were just starting to ripen, and pretty near every one of the tomatoes, even the ones that looked like they were all right, wherever the hail hit, why, they started to rot. Well, Dad had insurance on the greenhouse, and at the insurance company they had a little rider on their insurance policy that any crops he grew outside would also be covered. So I got 300 dollars from the insurance company besides what I sold.

One of the things I can always remember as a kid, whenever we went down there (to his grandfather's farm)--we always went down in the spring--they had big ripe strawberries. The first thing I'd do was make a beeline for that garden!

from an interview with A. J. Dunkel, age 92, retired farmer and teacher:

Be not the first by which a thing is tried,
Nor yet the last to set the old aside.

Q: What do you consider to be the major values of living in the country?

A: There are some advantages and disadvantages. Out in the country, you see more things, I'll say, as God has made them, as He has ordained. Everything in town is artificial--almost everything. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like the lily. That, in a way, answers what you're asking. It really is, to me, nature at its best in the country, but I wouldn't say at its worst in a town. Certainly there are artists and architects who make things, perhaps. But to improve on nature, I don't think you can do it.

One of the real values of doing this type of interviewing is getting to know other people. When I did the folklore project, my most interesting contact was 92-year-old A. J. Dunkel. He and his wife, Nelle, lived alone in a white farmhouse back a long gravel lane. Despite his feebleness, A. J. maintained a positive, optimistic outlook on life. "I am a happy man," he told me. As I talked to him about farming, poetry, politics, and philosophy, he impressed me with his keen intelligence and seasoned sense of humor. Here was a man who had lived an exemplary life of faith--to his family, to his community, to his land, and to his God. A. J. died about six months after I visited him, and many times since I have been thankful that I had the opportunity to know him.

As an English teacher, I have seen many of my students gain the appreciation, empathy, and awareness which can result from fieldwork activities. Kim, who after reading a Sherwood Anderson short story wrote a moving, sensitive essay about her neighbor, an old, blind woman who sang as she hung clothes out in the line. Eric, who wrote with pride about his great-great grandfather's Civil War experiences. Barb, who became fascinated with genealogy and eventually won a state 4-H award for her research project. These students and others have learned first-hand the values of family and community, and in the process gained a greater sense of personal identity and self-worth. Fieldwork is like new ground, full of fertile possibility and promise. Writing can flourish there. Students can grow.

APPENDIX

The following 50 activities are some of the many possibilities for using fieldwork in composition courses. Projects could encompass anywhere from one classroom period to a complete semester course, depending on the nature of the activity and the goals of the teacher.

1. Construct a family tree.
2. Write about the family record holders (oldest, youngest, tallest, shortest, richest, funniest, most famous, most unusual, best story teller, most children, most often married, best dresser, most schooling, etc.).
3. Write about how your family came to this country.
4. Write about the place your family has lived in the past.
5. Research the country of your ancestors.
6. Describe the place you grew up in.
7. "I remember when . . ." (complete with a series of reminiscences).
8. Write about the perceptions of your family members concerning the generation gap.
9. Write about entertainment today and in the past.
10. How did you spend your spare time? (friends, games, sports, activities, etc.)
11. The best and worst thing that ever happened to me.
12. Experiences in love and marriage.
13. Food and recipes. (How is food different today? What food do you miss? Are eating habits different today? How much did food cost years ago?)
14. Describe the houses you have lived in (electricity, plumbing, heat, number of rooms, neighbors, etc.).
15. Write about the methods of transportation in the past. (the first car ever owned, first plane trip, longest walk)
16. Education (schools attended, what were they like, what were the teachers like, honors and awards).
17. Family military history.
18. Family politics (party loyalties, first president voted for).
19. Family observations of celebrations and holidays (then and now).
20. Customs, traditions, and rituals (birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, graduations, funerals, other).
21. Religious history (church affiliations, leadership roles).
22. Work experiences (jobs you have had, salaries, vacation time, hours worked, union affiliation, businesses started or owned).
23. Have each member of the family write a message to future generations.
24. Write to libraries, archives, historical associations, the Library of Congress for genealogical information.
25. Write letters to relatives asking for information.
26. Make a pictorial history of your family.
27. Write about pictures of family members, houses, vacation spots.

28. Make a large map showing the family migration.

29. Make up small family trees or maps for use as cards or gifts.

30. Write up the family history as a story.

31. Record your autobiography up to the present and make this an ongoing project.

32. Make a slide show or home movie depicting the families' histories.

33. Research the history of the family (or more specialized topics, such as divorce, foster care, child rearing).

34. Write about the origins of your name.

35. Make a house log, containing information about the construction and occupants of the house.

36. Use characters in your family as characters in short stories, poems, or plays.

37. Write an article for publication concerning some aspect of family or local history.

38. Research the history of your community and write it in story form.

39. Collect and publish community folklore.

40. Write a community history play or musical.

41. Research, write, and publish a business district guide for your community.

42. Interview relatives and neighbors and collect information and recipes on a certain popular local food (apples, pumpkins, mushrooms, strawberries, etc.).

43. Investigate local community issues (energy, ecology, government, controversies, etc.).

44. Do occupational interviews and compile a "Career Guide."

45. "Tuning into Nature"--find a spot and become familiar with it, then write journals, essays, poetry (study Walden and A Sand County Almanac).

46. Write about historical buildings and landmarks in your community.

47. Research and report on the architecture in your community.

48. Interviews on a particular topic (with elementary students, parents, neighbors).

49. Write an informal "Guide for Incoming Freshmen."

50. Write articles about outstanding citizens in the community.

Use your imagination to develop new activities. The possibilities are limitless!

Teays Valley High School
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